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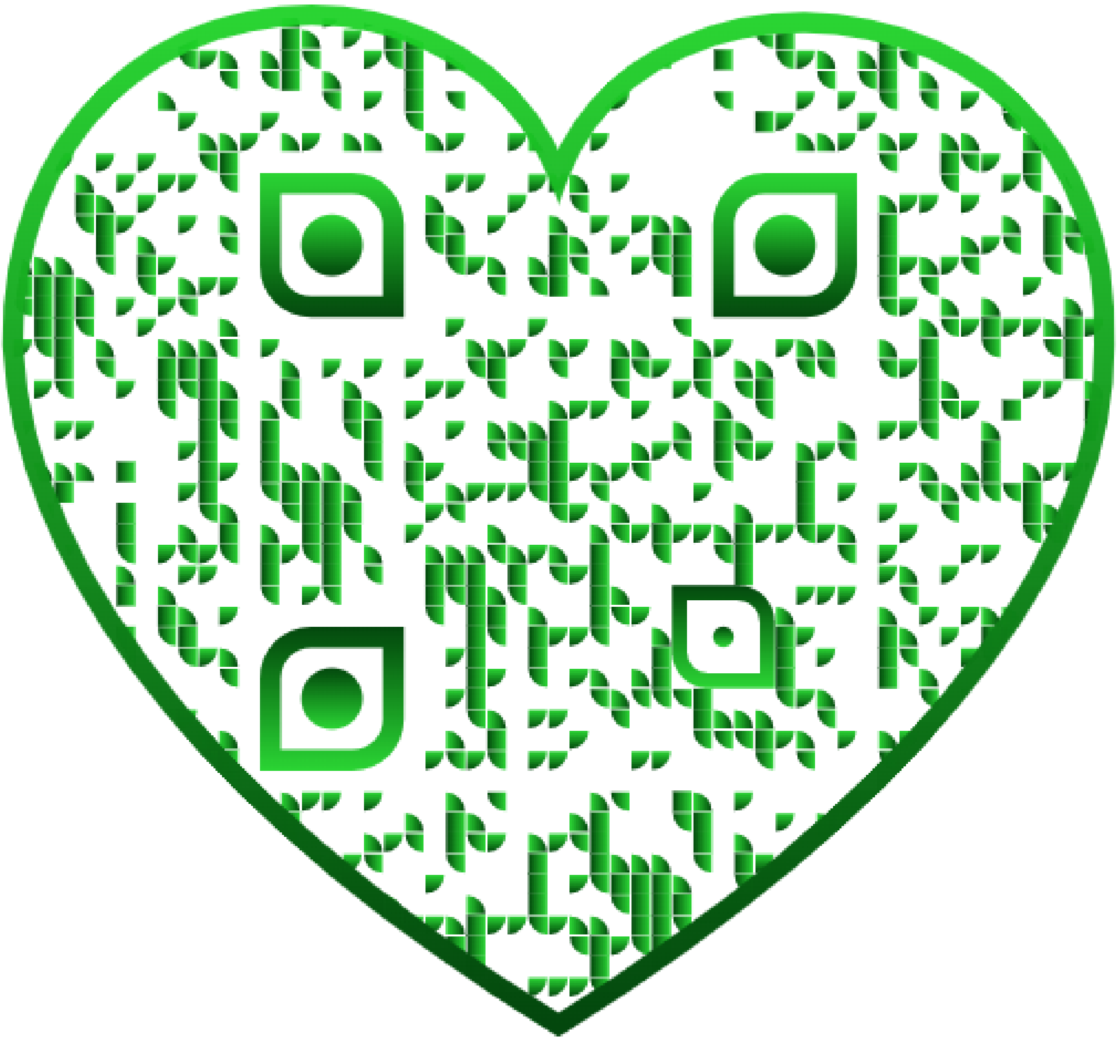

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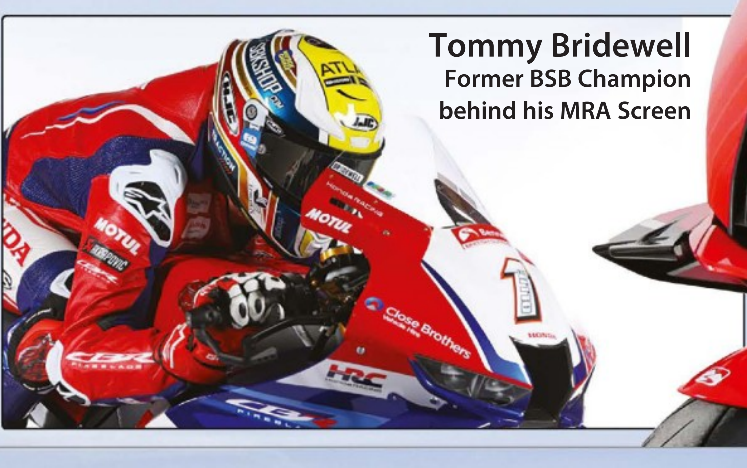

Tommy Bridewell
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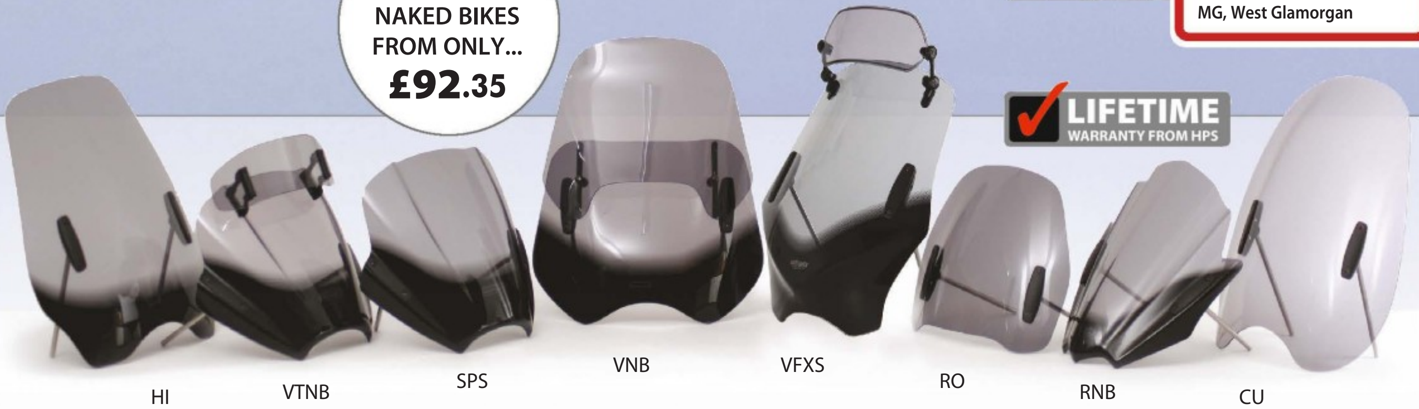

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‘BSA Gold Star is irresistible value’

32

56

Ace here, better on tarmac – and ‘Tén’ for value

50

Made in China? So what – it’s £6700 and it’s corking

Contents

Cash savvy special: ace new bikes, best-buy kit and PCP deals to make your money go further

Front end

10 **FIVE BIKES THAT MATTER THIS MONTH**
R1300R, Voge DS625X, fastest GP bike for sale, and more.

20 **FROM THE ARCHIVE**
Speed Triple, 1994: the bike that made Triumph great again.

22 **GET IN GEAR**
Assorted gubbins to improve your motorcycling life.

24 **TECH: NEW MOTOGP REGS**
Our engines prof on what's new – and what could've been.

29 **BEEN THERE, GOT THE T-SHIRT**
Material memories of a Cadwell scratch handicap win.

30 **LETTERS**
Inspirational Ixion, Team Bike glory days, '90s sportsbikes.

Features and Tests

32 **HORNET SP, MORBIDELLI C1002V, GOLD STAR**
Big fun, even bigger value. But which bike is the best?

42 **MORE TOP VALUE**
£6k off a H2 SX, plus more amazing deals on new bikes.

44 **'BEST THING I EVER BOUGHT'**
Invaluable kit and accessories that have proven ace value.

50 **CHINESE BIKES: CHEAP FOR A REASON?**
Great buys, or you get what you pay for? *Bike* investigates…

56 **Q&A: YAMAHA TÉNÉRÉ 700**
Have the latest tweaks put the Ténéré back on its perch?

67 **DEALS ON WHEELS**
This year's top PCP deals – starting from just £59 a month.

90 **INSIDE**
We join Triumph's new off-road squad in FIM SuperEnduro.

98 **ADVENTURE**
YouTubeist Itchy Boots shares a snippet from her new book.

90
A Triumph in SuperEnduro? Well we never

60
Who's got the best 'tache? Hands up…

Sport

60 **THE MAT OXLEY INTERVIEW**
Davey Todd on how nothing matches the thrill of the TT.

Know How

105 **THING OF THE MONTH**
Fold-away bar-end mirrors win toughest approval: a teen's.

106 **LIVING WITH**
BMW S1000R Sport. So far, so (very) good. Mostly…

108 **NEW BIKES**
F900XR and S1000RR updates, plus Moto Guzzi V7 Sport.

109 **WHY I LOVE MY…**
Ducati Streetfighter V4: a keeper for special occasions.

110 **OUR BIKES**
TDR250 fuelling around, plus KTM 690 Enduro upgrades.

112 **LISTINGS**
All you need to know about every current bike we've tested.

112 **PUB AMMO**
Ducati Days of Joy, MV warranties, Triumph chopper comp.

116 **HEAD TO TOE**
Clobber that keeps you comfy and cool in hot weather.

117 **KNOW IT ALL**
How to make a quick buck at American auctions.

117 **THE QUICK TYRE THING FOR…**
A kit that does a 'Grand' job of plugging punctures.

118 **OUT & ABOUT**
Road trip to the chippy wins over adventure bike sceptic.

122 **AHEAD OF ITS TIME**
Moto Morini Camel: the template for V-twin adventure bikes.

Hello

Bike
Issue 628 July 2025
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Something happened a couple of years ago. We started removing phrases like 'made in China' and 'for a Chinese bike' from road tests. And this was rather significant.

Previously, there'd always been the need to add a caveat or to make excuses for motorcycles coming from the manufacturing world power. It seemed their first larger-capacity bikes were similar to the thousands of scooters and 125s spilling out of the internet. Yes, they were cheap – but they were generally copies of existing (old) Japanese designs and suffered disappointing performance, quality and reliability.

This picture is me toddling along on a CFMoto 700CL-X in 2023, my first ride of which muttered about how it could be assessed on like-for-like terms with bikes from the large, established brands. We ran the 700 on long-term test and I chuffin' loved it. And since then things have gone from good to great. The latest models from CFMoto – and Voge, Kove and the rest – are even better designed, of greater quality, have long warranties, yet somehow are even cheaper. They appear staggering value, so we've taken a delve into the phenomenon of Chinese bikes. It's on page 50. We also have the very latest – a 997cc V-twin Morbidelli – in a comparison test on p32.

Lots more affordable and great value loveliness in the issue too, including a gloriously eclectic mix of the best buys – from a two-quid bargain-bin find to workshop gems costing thousands – because, as we should always remember, cheap and value aren't the same thing. We've also pulled together this summer's best finance deals on everything from modest retro commuters to brain-melting superbikes. The temptation (which you should obviously give in to) starts on p67.

Enjoy the issue.

Mike Armitage
Editor

Armitage caught in a moment of realisation

PIC: STUART COLLINS

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Team Bike

This magazine is made by the most talented team of bike journalists, writers and photographers in the universe. Here's what they've been doing this month.

Naked value

1

John Westlake

John's been a bike journalist since the Suzuki Bandit was fresh news, so he knows a great two-wheeled buy when he sees it. His group test is insightful, surprising, amusing, and involves chips.

Naked value, page 32

CHEAP
FOR A REASON?
£6699

2

Chris Cope

Chinese bikes. Now there's a topic to kick-start a heated conversation. Chris has dug deep into the world of high-spec but low-priced machinery to see if they really are too good to be true.

Cheap for a reason?, page 50

Oxley interview
'The buzz of the TT is a million times more than riding a short circuit'

3

Mat Oxley

As an Isle of Man winner himself, Mat knows how to get the best out of TT racers – and his interview with Davey Todd ahead of this year's races is truly glorious. Unputdownable, as they say.

Davey Todd interview, page 60

[Inside]
SuperEnduro rocks Newcastle
START

4

Chippy Wood

Legendary *Bike* photographer and a dab hand in a tractor, Chip goes behind the scenes with Triumph's new off-road squad. There's no one better at wading in, taking snaps and asking questions.

Inside SuperEnduro, page 90

FILTHY FUEL and CRAZY GOATS

5

Noraly Schoenmaker

You may know her as Itchy Boots from that there YouTube. Travelling round the world on her Royal Enfield Himalayan, we've got an exclusive excerpt from Noraly's new coming-soon book.

Adventure, page 98

Out & about
Strom in a teacup

6

Paul Lang

Nothing beats bikes, sunshine, mates and fine destinations. Langy and ex-*Bike* deputy ed Tony Hoare head to Norfolk with a V-Strom double act. Several puns are involved. There are more chips, too.

Out & about, page 118

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5 BIKES THAT REALLY MATTER THIS MONTH

A lot of buttons for your money

Motorsport colours are of course best. Odd nose due to radar cruise kit

£3440 less than a GS

Same engine, chassis and electronics as a GS, but three and a half grand less and a lower seat… what's not to like about the new **BMW R1300R**?

BMW may be making fuss about the new R1300R's sporty credentials, but that's not what's got BMW dealers fizzing. They're excited about the 790mm seat height and £13,200 price (just £200 more than the outgoing R1250R), which seems great value for a motorcycle that shares the engine, electronics and chassis with the £16,640 R1300GS.

'The price is very competitive,' says Charlie Aston, the retail manager at BMW Wollaston in Northampton. 'It's half the money of something like the M1000RR, yet has the same tech and more torque. Off the line it'll probably be quicker. Okay, so it hasn't got 200bhp, but who uses that if you're not on track? Maybe the R is going to be the clever choice for discerning buyers this year.'

Charlie's also pleased that BMW have kept the seat height low. 'It's still a lot lower than the GS,' he says. 'That's important. Customers fit a big screen and all the luggage and go touring on the Rs, which are low-stress because riders can put both feet flat on the ground. People do big mileages two-up on them.'

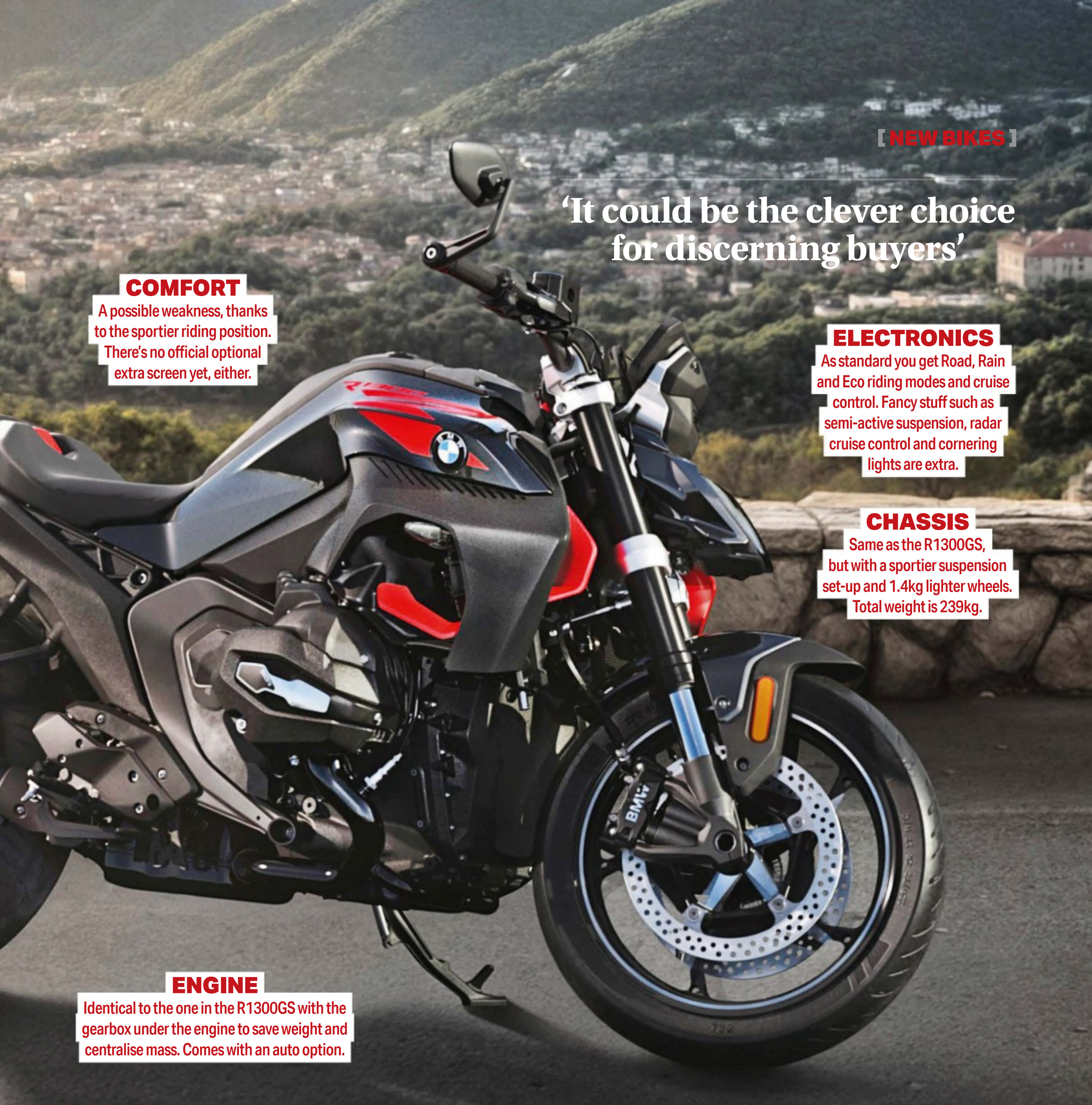
It'll be interesting to see if the new bike's increased sportiness puts people off. The R1300R's bars are lower compared to the old model's to move weight over the front wheel (just like the new RT, see right), and the footpegs are further back for a sportier feel.

'With 145bhp and more torque than a KTM 1390 Super Duke R, the R1300R feels like it could be the gentleman's S1000R,' says Charlie. 'It's got all the torque and power you need to go out for a blast with your mates, but there's a bit more functionality because you can put luggage on and tour on it.'

The R1300R will be in showrooms from June.

CREDIT PHOTOS: BMW

‘It could be the clever choice for discerning buyers’



COMFORT
A possible weakness, thanks to the sportier riding position. There’s no official optional extra screen yet, either.

ELECTRONICS
As standard you get Road, Rain and Eco riding modes and cruise control. Fancy stuff such as semi-active suspension, radar cruise control and cornering lights are extra.

CHASSIS
Same as the R1300GS, but with a sportier suspension set-up and 1.4kg lighter wheels. Total weight is 239kg.

ENGINE
Identical to the one in the R1300GS with the gearbox under the engine to save weight and centralise mass. Comes with an auto option.

New R1300RT packs the tech

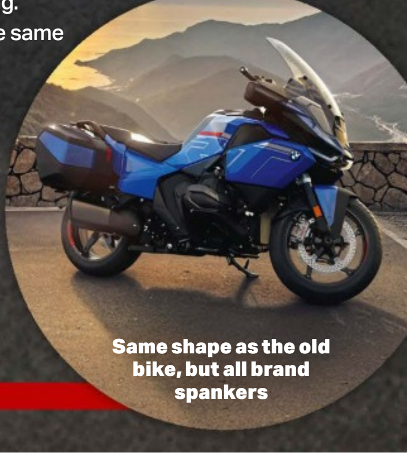
As usual BMW have gone to town on the new R1300RT’s tech, with adjustable fairing ventilation panels, modes that can change the bike’s geometry by jacking up the rear end, and BMW’s new automatic gearbox. Plus, of course, there’s all the latest electronics such as radar-assisted cruise control, a whacking great stereo and a widescreen telly for a dash.

The adjustable fairing panels could be seriously useful if they’re as good as BMW claim. They say the vents channel decent amounts of fresh air at the rider even when you’re dawdling through town, thereby removing one of the disadvantages of riding with a huge screen on hot days. In winter you can close them to stay warm.

The geometry changing mode also sounds interesting. Called Dynamic Chassis Adaption (DCA), it works by raising the rear ride height to fractionally reduce the steering head angle to speed up steering.

The base bike is, of course, largely the same as the GS and R (see left). But the riding position is different from both and is slightly sportier than the old R1250RT – the rider is ‘noticeably further forward’ according to BMW.

Prices start at £18,900 for the standard bike no one will buy, £21,325 for the LE with all the kit, and £22,100 for the LE with the automatic gearbox. It will be in showrooms from June.



Same shape as the old bike, but all brand spankers

Patina exotica

This **1955 BSA Gold Star** race bike has just been returned to the road. It's hard to imagine anything cooler

BS
NJB Racing

Drums from an A65, and a saddle that oozes character

Reinhard Neumair is one of those mechanical geniuses you rarely hear about because he just quietly gets on being astonishing. But occasionally bikes like this appear to demonstrate what he's been up to – in this case, turning a 350 Gold Star into a 500 by making his own crank, camshaft and main bearings, boring out the cylinder and replacing the tappets with some taken from a Jawa speedway race engine. And then winning rounds of the German singles championship on it.

Reinhard, who's based near Munich in Germany, bought the bike as a standard 350 back in 1985. 'I repaired it and on my first ride I realised it was far too much fun for it to be in a museum,' he tells *Bike*. 'First I just wanted a good-looking café racer – I had no intention to race it. But the crankshaft broke almost immediately so I had to dive in. That was the start of my business of working on bikes. It taught me my skills – how to fit a crankshaft, hone cylinders and valve seats, and so on.

'I used an overboard cylinder, then I made my own crankshaft to get a square bore and stroke – the same as a Manx Norton, 86 x 86mm. I designed my own piston and made special crank bearings based on the ones they use in Jawa and JAP speedway engines. I designed my own camshaft, too.

'I rode it on the road for a few years then I thought it would be good enough for racing. They had just started the Super Single race series in Germany so I took the lights off and put on some race tyres. I won two rounds of the German championship on it.'

Incredibly, given that it didn't even have a kickstart, Reinhard was using the Goldie between races as a road bike – and not just to pop to the shops.

'My wife and I rode it to the Isle of Man to watch the TT,' he says. 'I put the silencer on for the trip, and took the megaphone in the rucksack to fit when I was there.'

While on the island, he had a clutch problem and a chap called John Flood offered to help fix it. 'He suggested I race the bike in the Manx GP. I was short of money so he sponsored me with £200 [hence the sticker on the fairing].' Reinhard did the Manx in 1992, 1993 and 1995 before swapping to a Manx Norton.

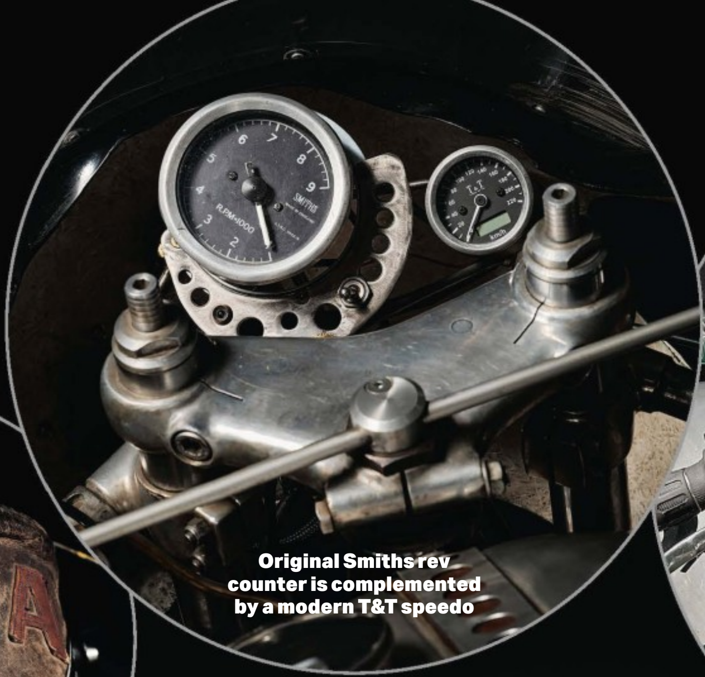
The bike then sat in Reinhard's workshop on display. 'I had been asked to build a Guzzi café racer, and every time the customer came in he asked if I wanted to sell the Gold Star. I told him no, but over the years we became friends and I eventually agreed to sell it if he agreed never to sell it on. He now rides it around on the road, which is how people have found out about it…'

SHOCKS

Standard units have been replaced with ones from NJB, a British firm that specialises in classic tackle.

NJB Racing SHOCKS
Continental
ContiClassicAttack
110/90-R 18

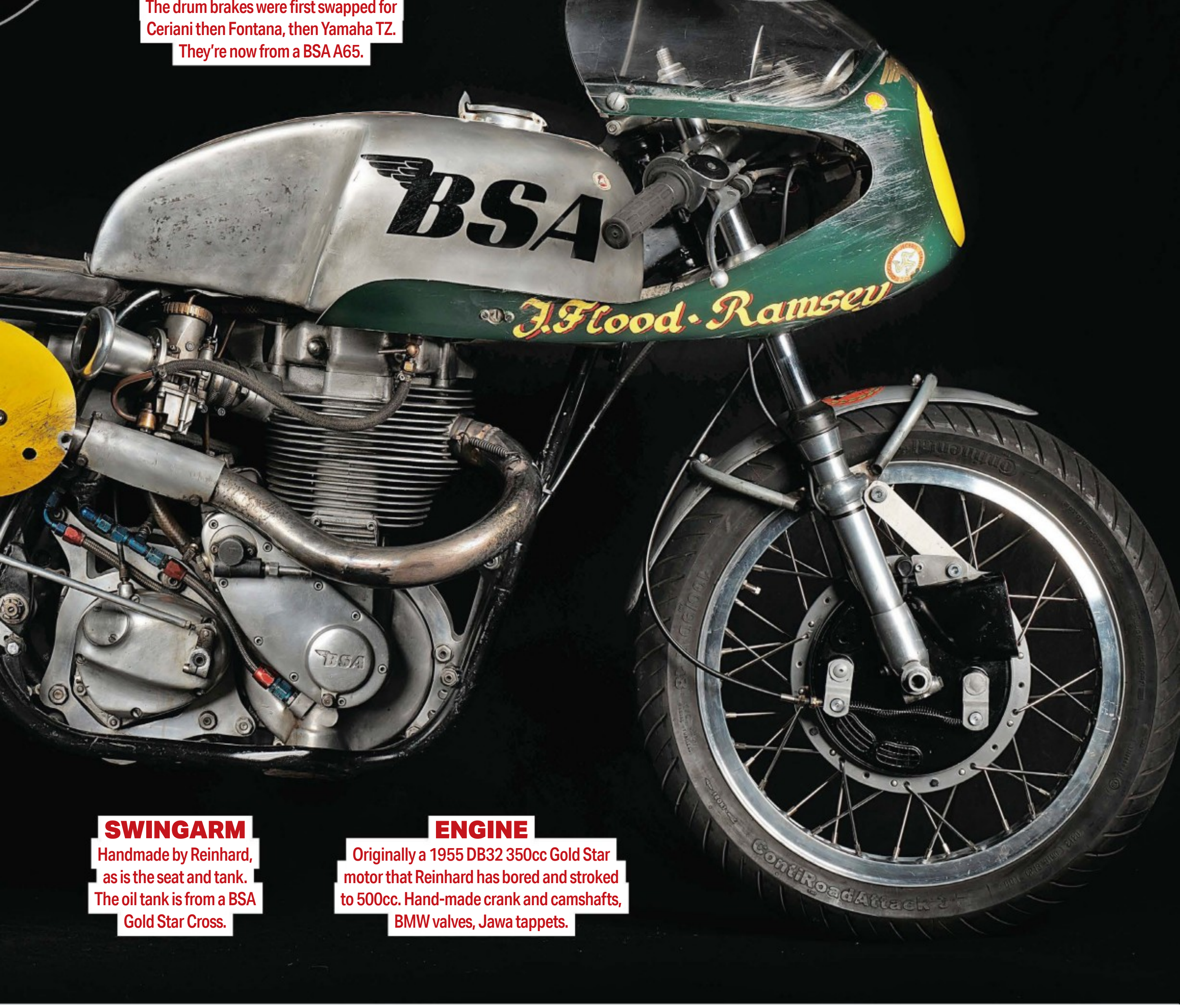
PICS: RODRIGO STIX



Original Smiths rev counter is complemented by a modern T&T speedo

Solitary light to remind you that it's a road bike

FRONT END
Reinhard fitted a set of Ceriani forks for racing. The drum brakes were first swapped for Ceriani then Fontana, then Yamaha TZ. They're now from a BSA A65.



SWINGARM
Handmade by Reinhard, as is the seat and tank. The oil tank is from a BSA Gold Star Cross.

ENGINE
Originally a 1955 DB32 350cc Gold Star motor that Reinhard has bored and stroked to 500cc. Hand-made crank and camshafts, BMW valves, Jawa tappets.

Adventure for £79 a month

New **Voge DS625X** gets more power and high-quality kit – and costs just £6199

Yep, it's another Chinese bike that makes you wonder whether now's the time to take the plunge. The new Voge DS625X has a 581cc, 63bhp parallel twin motor, adjustable Kayaba suspension, two rider modes, piles of kit as standard, a two-year warranty, and it's made by the same people who build BMW's parallel twins. The DS is £79 a month on a PCP with a £1400 deposit.

The engine is a development of the well-proven 494cc DS525X motor that arrived in 2023 and made an A2-licence-friendly 47bhp. The new engine has been completely reworked, with a new 270° firing interval to give that off-beat V-twin character, an oil cooler to help reduce warm-up times (and emissions), plus an improved clutch with a lighter feel. And of course the extra 87cc helps boost power by 34 per cent to 63bhp at 9000rpm. Torque is 42 lb.ft at 6500rpm.

The double cradle steel chassis is largely the same as the old bike's, though the footrests are moved 55mm forward for greater long-distance comfort. The suspension is upgraded to 41mm Kayaba forks with preload and rebound damping adjustment, and a fully adjustable remote reservoir Kayaba rear shock. The wheels are the same road/off-road compromise as before, with a 19in front and 17in rear.

> 'Voge are trying to get a foothold in the UK market so they're coming in at crazy money'

Electronics are of course plentiful. There are two rider modes – Eco and Sport – the ABS and traction control can be switched off for off-road japes, the switchgear is backlit (which R1300GS owners don't get), there's a 7in TFT screen and tyre pressure monitors. You even get a built-in forward-facing camera that records rides to a memory card. The only thing missing is cruise control.

There's a stack of mechanical extras that come as standard, too. Engine bars, sump guard, radiator guard, hand protectors, centrestand, span-adjustable levers and a height-adjustable screen are all included, as are the LED fog lamps. If you want the three-piece aluminium luggage that costs an extra £699.

'Voge are trying to get a foothold in the UK market so they're coming in at crazy money,' says Luke Brackenbury from Voge. 'Once people realise how good they are and demand increases, those prices are bound to go up, like they have with Hyundai cars. I know I would say this, but I honestly think riders need to get on board now.'

The DS625X comes in black and the desert yellow you see here. They're in dealers now.

A lot of bike for one third the price of an R1300GS TE

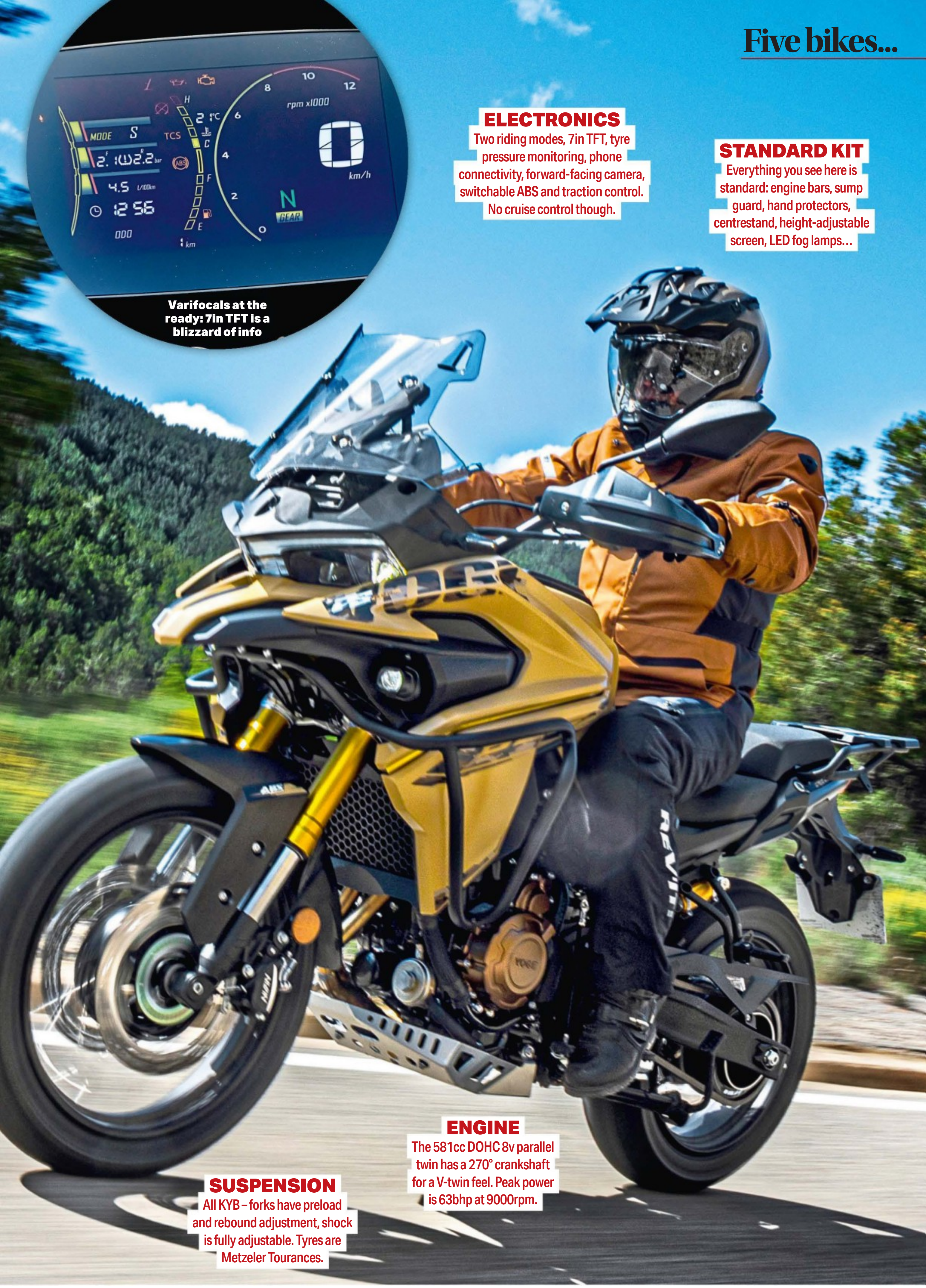
MODE
ABS
ENTER

Backlit switchgear, two riding modes and switchable ABS

Who are Voge?

» The premium motorcycle brand of Loncin – the company that makes BMW's large-capacity parallel twins, among other things. Voge launched in 2018.

PICS: VOGE



Varifocals at the ready: 7in TFT is a blizzard of info

ELECTRONICS
Two riding modes, 7in TFT, tyre pressure monitoring, phone connectivity, forward-facing camera, switchable ABS and traction control. No cruise control though.

STANDARD KIT
Everything you see here is standard: engine bars, sump guard, hand protectors, centrestand, height-adjustable screen, LED fog lamps...

ENGINE
The 581cc DOHC 8v parallel twin has a 270° crankshaft for a V-twin feel. Peak power is 63bhp at 9000rpm.

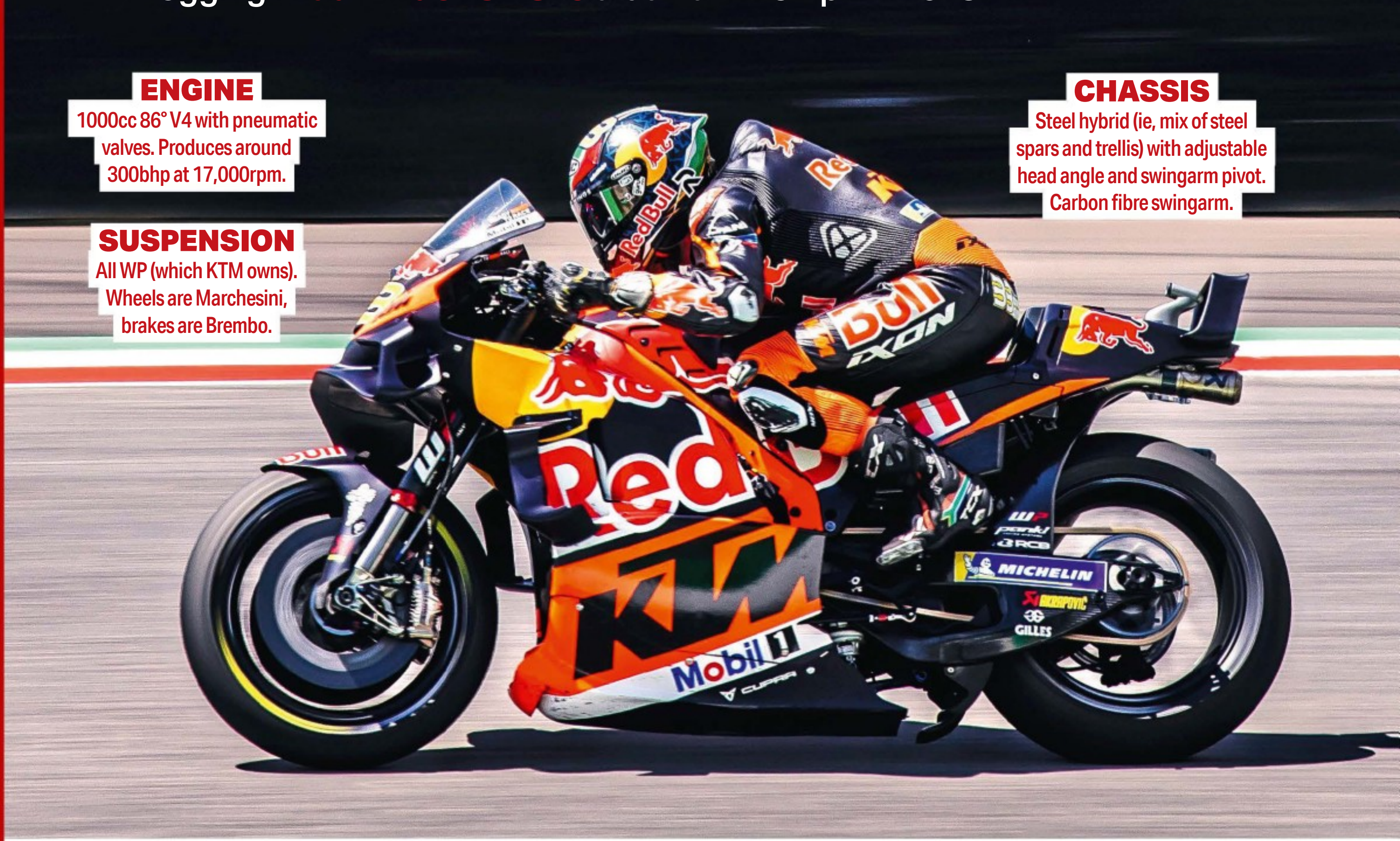
SUSPENSION
All KYB – forks have preload and rebound adjustment, shock is fully adjustable. Tyres are Metzeler Tourances.

Starting requires an IT expert and umbrella holder

[RACE BIKES]

Fastest GP bike for sale

KTM flogging **Brad Binder's RC16** that hit 227.5mph in 2023



ENGINE
1000cc 86° V4 with pneumatic valves. Produces around 300bhp at 17,000rpm.

SUSPENSION
All WP (which KTM owns). Wheels are Marchesini, brakes are Brembo.

CHASSIS
Steel hybrid (ie, mix of steel spars and trellis) with adjustable head angle and swingarm pivot. Carbon fibre swingarm.

Imagine turning up at a run what you brung on this pneumatic-valved bad boy. The KTM RC16 clocked 227.5mph at the end of Mugello's main straight in the 2023 sprint race with Brad Binder on board – a figure that was equalled by Pol Espargaro's RC16 in 2024, but has never been beaten.

You will have to iron out a few issues before taking it to Santa Pod, though. Firstly, there's the small matter of starting it. KTM say the bike is in full running order but 'due to the specialised nature of modern MotoGP motorcycles – including pneumatic valve actuation and a mandatory unified ECU – independent private operation is not possible'. But they then mention that 'any potential track use and service options can be discussed separately with KTM Factory Racing'. So you never know.

Fastest ever MotoGP bikes

(All records achieved at Mugello)
» 1= KTM RC16, Brad Binder, 227.5mph
» 1= KTM RC16, Pol Espargaro, 227.5mph
» 2= Ducati GP23, Enea Bastianini, 226.7mph
» 2= KTM RC16, Pedro Acosta, 226.7mph
» 2= Ducati GP24, Alex Marquez, 226.7mph

> **'You will have to iron out a few issues – firstly, the small matter of starting it…'**

There's then the money problem – it's being sold by a sealed bid auction, with a guide price of €350,000 (£298,000). But you do get a lot of tech for your money. The V4 makes around 300bhp and is linked to a seamless gearbox, the aero was designed in conjunction with Red Bull's F1 team, the swingarm is carbon fibre, and of course there are all the ride-height and holeshot devices necessary for run-what-you-brung victory.

Also, it's one of KTM's most successful MotoGP bikes – in 2023 Binder took two sprint victories, seven sprint podiums and five GP podiums. Get it bought. KTM need the money.

» More details at rmsothebys.com

PICS: KTM

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givimoto.com

'It grips!'

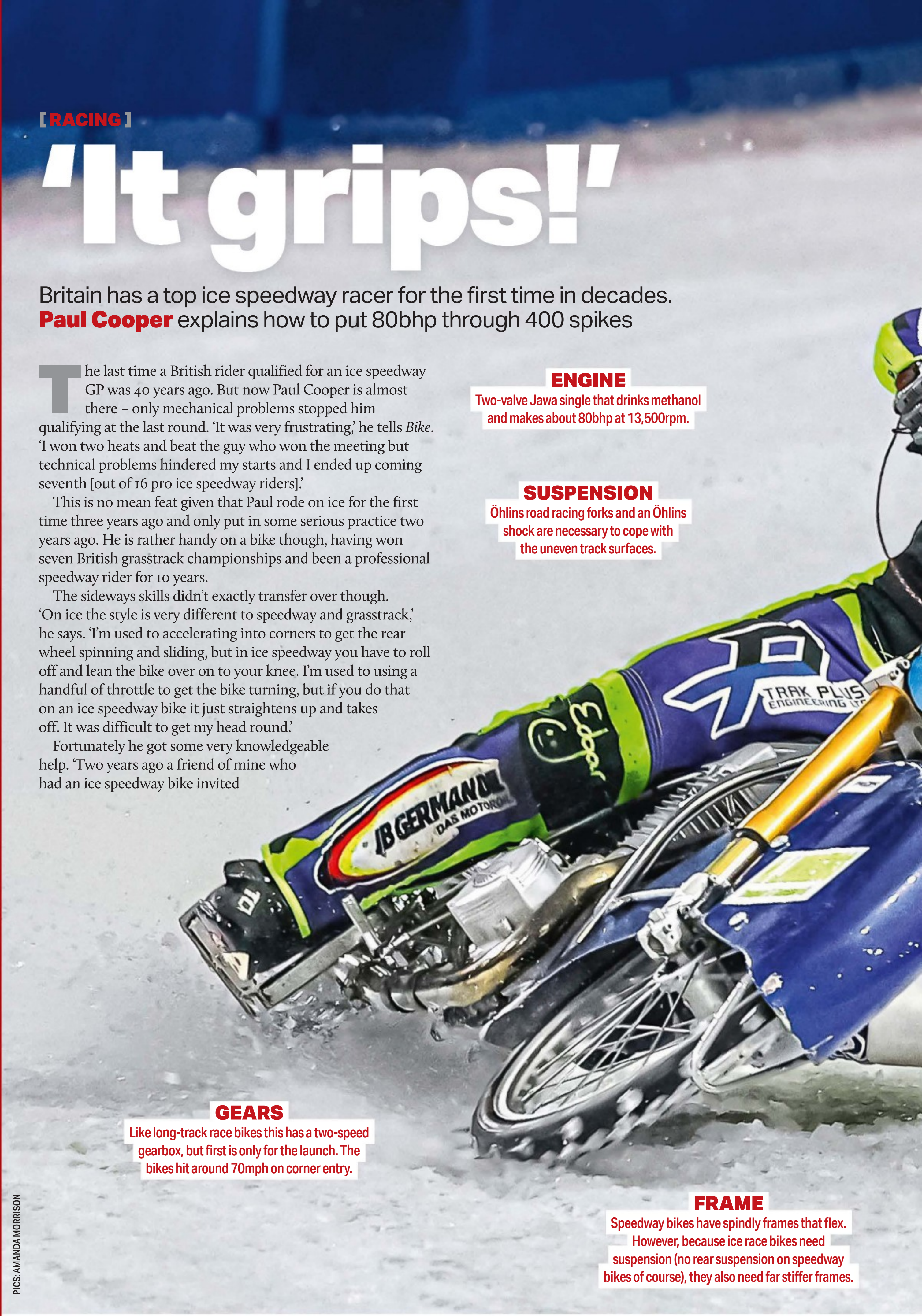
Britain has a top ice speedway racer for the first time in decades. **Paul Cooper** explains how to put 80bhp through 400 spikes

The last time a British rider qualified for an ice speedway GP was 40 years ago. But now Paul Cooper is almost there – only mechanical problems stopped him qualifying at the last round. 'It was very frustrating,' he tells *Bike*. 'I won two heats and beat the guy who won the meeting but technical problems hindered my starts and I ended up coming seventh [out of 16 pro ice speedway riders].'

This is no mean feat given that Paul rode on ice for the first time three years ago and only put in some serious practice two years ago. He is rather handy on a bike though, having won seven British grasstrack championships and been a professional speedway rider for 10 years.

The sideways skills didn't exactly transfer over though. 'On ice the style is very different to speedway and grasstrack,' he says. 'I'm used to accelerating into corners to get the rear wheel spinning and sliding, but in ice speedway you have to roll off and lean the bike over on to your knee. I'm used to using a handful of throttle to get the bike turning, but if you do that on an ice speedway bike it just straightens up and takes off. It was difficult to get my head round.'

Fortunately he got some very knowledgeable help. 'Two years ago a friend of mine who had an ice speedway bike invited



ENGINE
Two-valve Jawa single that drinks methanol and makes about 80bhp at 13,500rpm.

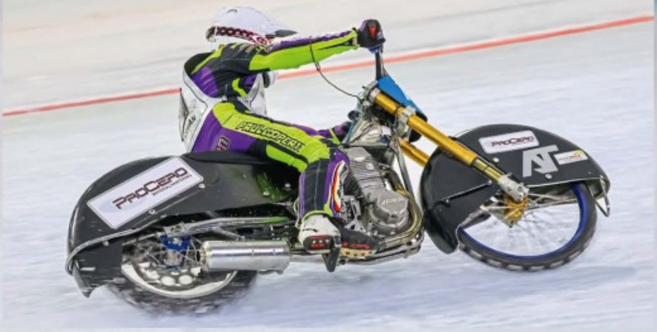
SUSPENSION
Öhlins road racing forks and an Öhlins shock are necessary to cope with the uneven track surfaces.

GEARS
Like long-track race bikes this has a two-speed gearbox, but first is only for the launch. The bikes hit around 70mph on corner entry.

FRAME
Speedway bikes have spindly frames that flex. However, because ice race bikes need suspension (no rear suspension on speedway bikes of course), they also need far stiffer frames.

PICS: AMANDA MORRISON

‘If you drop the clutch it will stand up on end’



Note the Öhlins forks – you need proper suspension for ice racing

me over to Sweden to practise on his machine. But once I was there, Stefan Svensson [multiple Swedish champion and second in the world] offered to lend me his spare GP bike. I’d only been there a day and I was using a GP bike! He came to the track every day and gave me tips – he was excited that a successful British grasstrack rider was giving it a go, and wanted to help.’

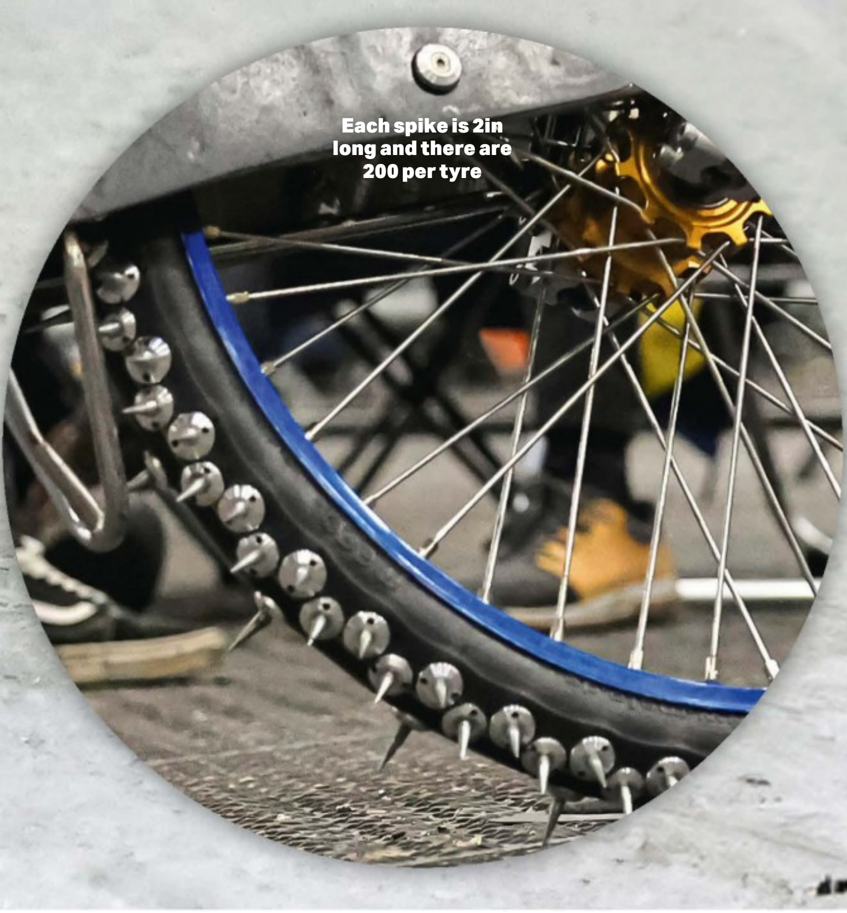
Stefan’s bike is, as you’d imagine, a fearsome bit of kit. ‘It uses an upright two-valve 500cc single-cylinder Jawa engine and two-speed gearbox – you bang it into second right after the start.’ Like speedway bikes it uses methanol fuel, and Paul reckons it makes about the same power as his grasstrack machines – 80bhp at 13,500rpm.

‘If you drop the clutch it will stand up on end because of the power and grip. Ice speedway bikes have softer clutch springs so the power feeds in more softly. It’s also higher and longer than a speedway bike to help it drive off the line and round corners.’

Paul now has to sit out the summer before he can compete on the ice again. ‘I’m going to Sweden next January to practise then I’m competing in a world championship qualification meeting. The top eight make the world final so that’s something to aim for…”

BRAKES
Nope, you won’t be needing any of those.

SPIKES
Grip is so good that riders have lost their little fingers from the bar ends touching down in corners. Yes, bars down.



Each spike is 2in long and there are 200 per tyre

1994
Triumph Speed Triple

To celebrate the recent release of the most powerful, high-tech Speed Triple ever, **Phil West** remembers our first encounter with the iconic original

By **Phil West**

Journalists usually gloss over the fact most launches and first UK tests are in the depths of winter. No one wants to hear our whinges about riding exciting new bikes, especially as most are in Spain at swanky hotels.

But *Bike*'s world-first test of Triumph's Speed Triple 900 was different. In late 1993 the recently revived marque hadn't explored press junkets. My scoop ride of the Trophy 1200 in 1991 comprised a rendezvous in Triumph's factory car park, followed by a two-hour ride and a photoshoot in a foggy disused quarry. Triumph's first 'proper' launch wasn't until 1995's Thunderbird 900, and even that was in January… in Warwickshire.

The new Speed Triple became available soon after the 1993 NEC Show while frost was on the ground. This posed something of a dilemma, but as we knew it was all about image we got 'arty': the café racer vibe inspired a black and white photoshoot with renown rocker Mark Wilsmore (pre-Ace Café times) plus be-leathered girlfriend at historic Triumph dealer Reg Allen.

A second riding shoot – in colour – followed, but as the roads were still greasy we concocted a flaming burnout cover image, focusing on the Speed Triple logo.

The bike quietly impressed. It made the most of Triumph's then strengths, included the best cycle parts available and raised the bar with glossy black quality (Hinckley's new paint shop had just come on stream). With its characterful engine, it had more heritage-fed individuality and personality than all previous Hinckley bikes combined. 'There is, truly, a certain magic being weaved at Hinckley,' I wrote in the January 1994 issue. 'And this time it's the Speed Triple that has more than its fair share.'

Later that year in the sun, we put a yellow version in its first group test against Ducati's Monster 900 and Honda's CB1000 'Big One', naturally ending with a wheelie-fest photoshoot. Picking a winner was a close call, but the Triumph – for the first time of any Hinckley-era bikes – came out top. 'The Triumph wins simply because it has the best of both – it's the triple between a twin and a four – and a whole lot more besides. At first glance it might have the least to offer. At the end of the day, it gives more than you'd ever have believed.'

A sea-change bike for Triumph? You betcha. The Speed Triple has gone on to be the firm's signature.

BIKE

CBR600
The bike for all reasons

JANUARY 1994

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST MOTORCYCLE MAGAZINE

Hot stuff!

Triumph's sizzling Speed Triple – p26

BIKE shop

NEW! CONSUMER SECTION INSIDE

Tested: GSX-R750s ■ Waterproofs ■ New products

Jan '94: burnouts were still cool…

The sort of carry-on that'll ruin biking for everyone, etc, etc

PIC: BAUER

From the archive

Bike: The voice of motorcycling since 1971

BIKE
THOMAS
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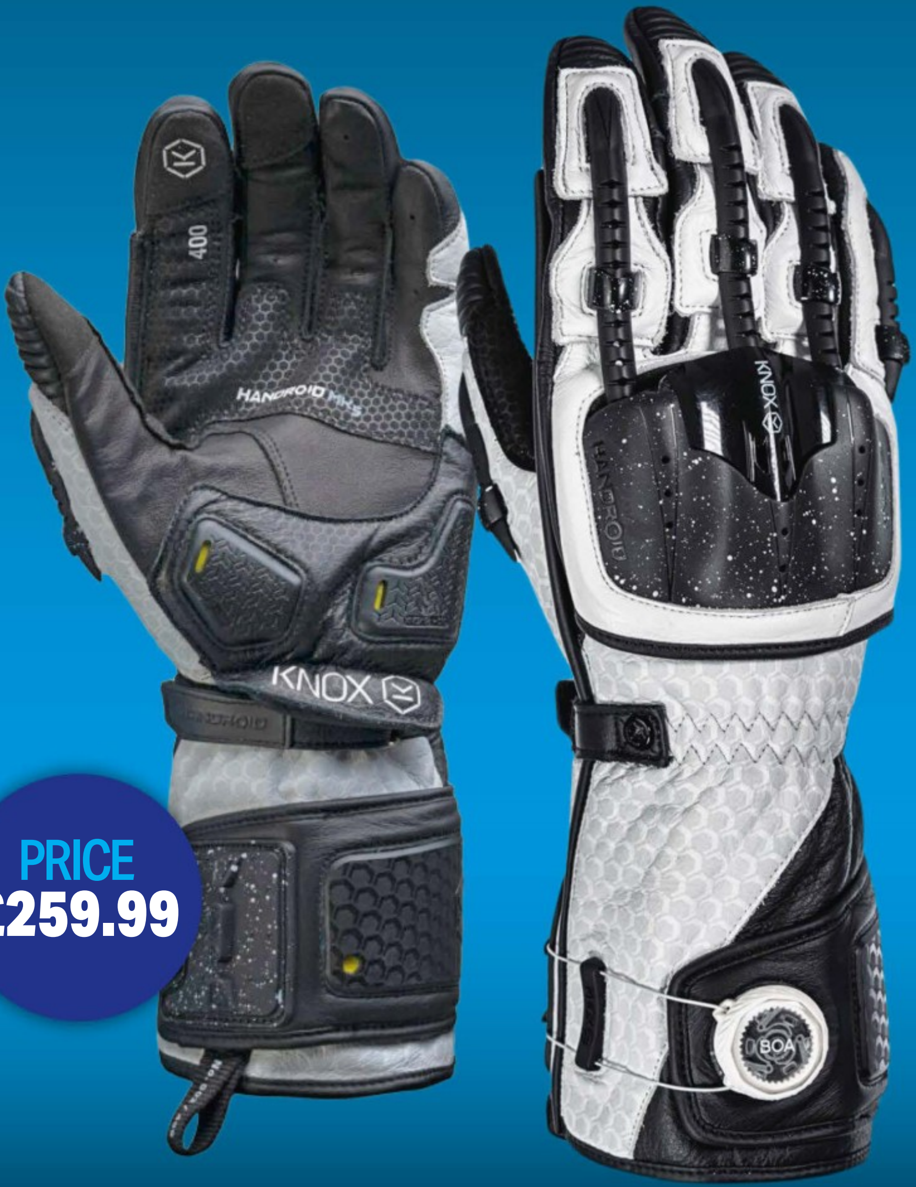
> ‘A sea-change bike for Triumph? You betcha’

GET IN GEAR

The latest word in swanky riding gear, desirable bolt-ons and must-have goodies for your pride and joy



PRICE £259.99

Knox Handroid Limited Edition

WHAT IS IT? Is it really 15 years since Knox launched the wild-looking exoskeleton Handroid gloves? Seems it is. To celebrate, Knox have released a special edition colourway for the current swanky Mk5 version. They're only making 400 pairs, all adorned with their unique number.

WHAT DO WE LIKE? These have always looked very cool, always felt top-drawer, and we like the BOA closing system. You probably need to be a huge fan to want limited-edition gloves, especially with them being quite pricey, but fine places for your hands indeed.

HOW MUCH AND WHERE FROM? £259.99 **planet-knox.com**

New stuff

Clobber for you and your motorcycle

» NEXX X.Lifetour

WHAT IS IT? A new modular helmet with an open-wide frontage. Designed for comfort, it boasts twin rubber seals for the front and the visor, and vortex generators to reduce drag.

WHAT DO WE LIKE? Vortex generators sound a bit *Back to the Future*, but this appears to be a flip-up lid that'll be as quiet and reassuring as a full-face hat. Like all the fine features, the smooth un-flip-up style, and that it keeps a somewhat sporty look.

HOW MUCH AND WHERE FROM?
from £359.99 **nexx-helmet.co.uk**

X.PRO
FROM
£359.99

Weise
PRICE
£79.99

« Weise Rugged Rucksack

WHAT IS IT? The newest thingummy in Weise's Tempest collection. Ripstop PVC and welded seams give an IPX6 waterproof rating. It can hold up to 25 litres, and can be used as a tailpack.

WHAT DO WE LIKE? Why is stashing capacity measured in litres? You're hardly going to fill a bag with beer or petrol. That said, this thing's military grade and so you probably could. Like the simplicity, and very much like that it can be used as a tailpack. Handy.

HOW MUCH AND WHERE FROM?
£79.99 **weiseclothing.com**

makita
PRICE
£129.14
makita
18V

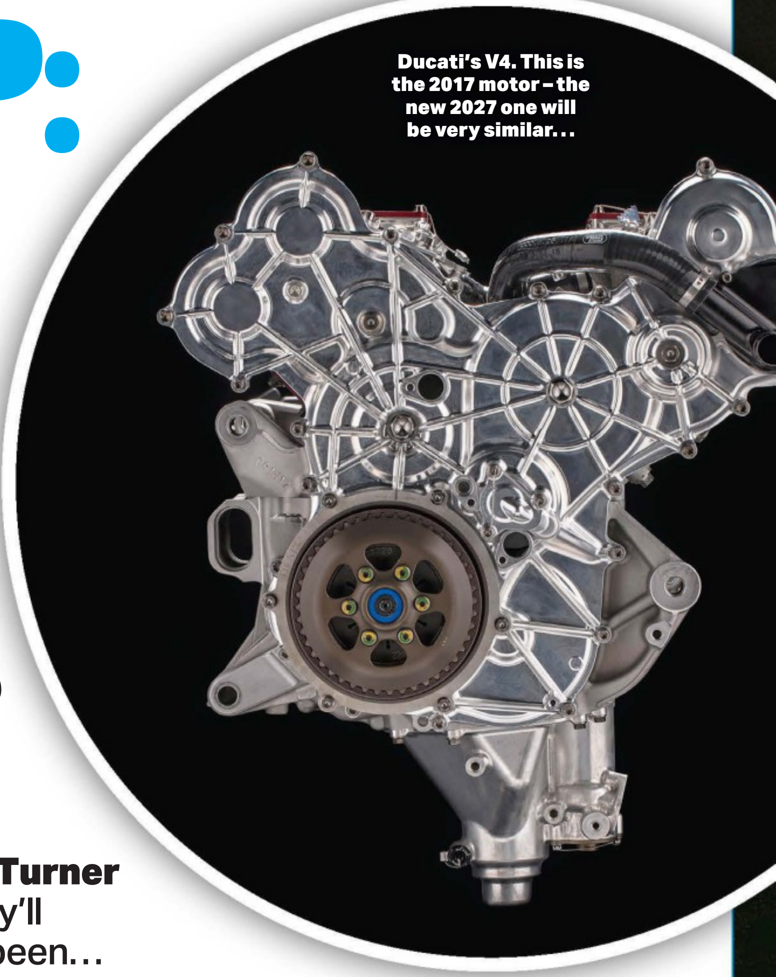
» Makita DHW180 LXT pressure washer

WHAT IS IT? A battery-powered squirter for bike cleaning on the hoof. It has an 82-minute run time and produces 24 bar of operating pressure. And it only weighs 2.2kg (without the battery, mind).

WHAT DO WE LIKE? Yes, you'll need to remember to charge it up. But this will be easy for quickly blasting crap off bikes – no constantly tripping over a power cable or hunting for extension leads. And weighs little so you can skip round the bike.

HOW MUCH AND WHERE FROM?
£129.14 **makitauk.com**

MotoGP: can we have a triple, please?



Ducati's V4. This is the 2017 motor – the new 2027 one will be very similar...

New GP regulations are looming. **Jamie Turner** prods the rules, predicts what power they'll make, and muses over what could have been...

By Jamie Turner

Jamie Turner is professor of engines at KAUST. He owns a BMW K1200S and loves two-strokes.

The new MotoGP regulations for 2027 are nearly upon us, with the most important being those affecting engines. There is a 15 per cent reduction in capacity – to 850cc – and that puts us in an interesting place from a beard-stroking and navel-gazing point of view.

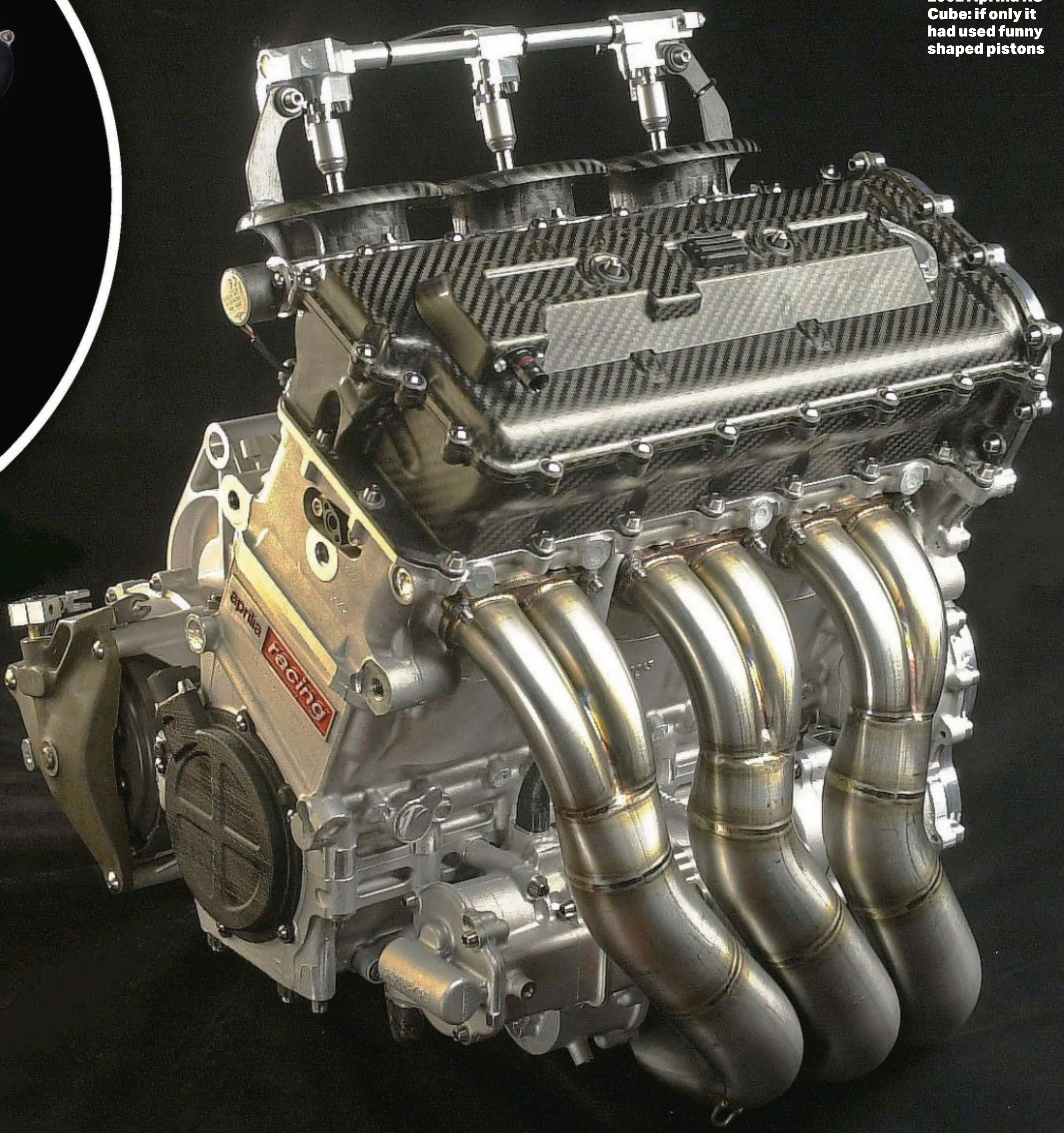
Let's recap where we've been with MotoGP engines, since it was realised in 2002 that the only way four-strokes could beat 500cc two-strokes was to allow oil boilers to have twice the capacity (in fact, 990cc). All engines have had to be naturally aspirated (NA) since just after the Second World War, which on the one hand choked off an interesting technical avenue but on the other set bikes up to be the standard-bearers for anyone appreciative of the connoisseur's art of building high-specific-output NA engines. Actually, the 'no supercharging' thing is now a real restriction – if we'd been continually allowed it who knows where we'd be by now. But no use crying over spilt milk.

This first set of four-stroke rules led to real lairiness – engine control and rider aids were nowhere near as sophisticated as they would quickly become – and so engine displacement was reduced to 800cc in 2007 in an attempt to rein in power. However, this resulted in screamers that were even more difficult to master and thus, somewhat bizarrely, capacity was increased again to 1000cc in 2012. But with one important new limitation: maximum bore size was set at 81mm, where it has been until now.

An interesting discovery comes out of this. The engine in the Ducati Panigale V4 R really is as close to a current MotoGP unit that we can buy. It has the same bore and stroke as a the V4 MotoGP engine (81 x 48.4mm), the same valve train and the same general architecture, including the counter-rotating crank. Wow. It nudges 240bhp at 15,500rpm with a full race kit and Shell's finest slippy stuff. Taking this and applying more freedom, I guess 300bhp in MotoGP shouldn't be that surprising – especially since I think MotoGP engines rev to about 17,300rpm.

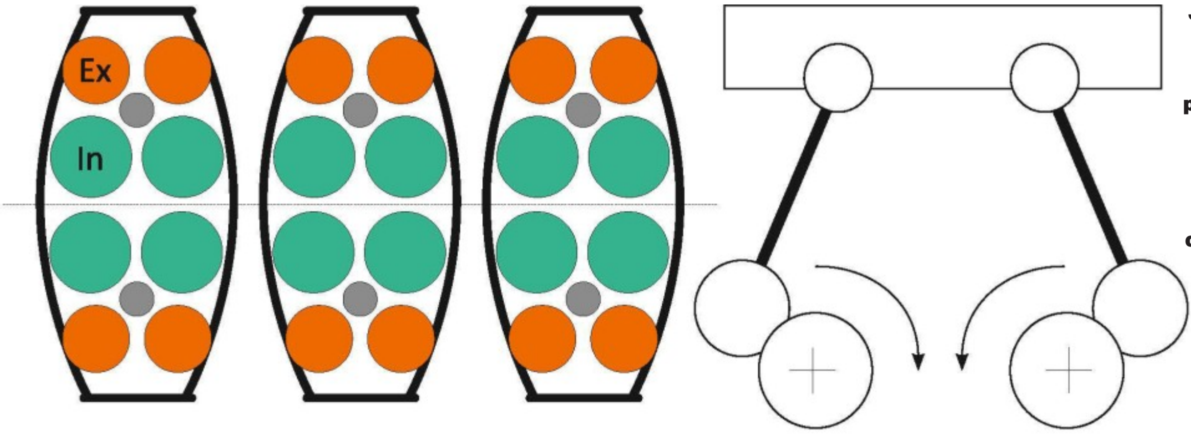
Where have I plucked this specific-sounding figure from? It's all down to mean piston speed. F1 car engine limitations mandate a bore and stroke of 80 x 53mm and a maximum engine speed of 15,000rpm, giving a maximum MPS of 26.5m/s – not a surprise because we've been there or thereabouts with performance four-strokes for years. Assuming one can get to 28m/s with freer regulations, this puts MotoGP engines at just over 17,300rpm. It could be higher, but it seems reasonable, and I suppose maximum power speed will be about there – let's say 17,000rpm. Using those figures with 300bhp gives a torque of 91 lb.ft and a brake mean effective pressure of 13.1 bar. Again, eminently believable.

As an aside, I have previous history in beard-stroking with regards to MotoGP regulations; they've been far more open for the free-thinking engine engineer/mad professor (delete as applicable) than we've had in F1 for years. Twenty-odd years ago the parent company of my then employer (Lotus) was Proton, who also owned MV Agusta. I pointed out there appeared to be a loophole in the regs at the time. Bikes had minimum weight limits depending on their number of cylinders: twins and triples



2002 Aprilia RS Cube: if only it had used funny shaped pistons

> ‘In true formula racing you have rules based just on fuel allowance, and anything else goes’



Jamie's oval triple concept. Central downdraft intake to four valves per piston (green), two exhaust systems from the end valves (orange), two spark plugs, four camshafts. If only it was allowed

had 135kg (hence Aprilia's three-cylinder RS Cube), four and five-cylinder bikes had 145kg, and six cylinders (or more) had to weigh at least 155kg. Hmm. Accepting valve area is pretty much the limit to power for NA engines, and being a student of the unusual, obviously I knew of the oval-piston Hondas, and it clearly seemed a route to go. So, I tried to get us to look at an oval-piston triple with the major axis of the pistons at right angles to two crankshafts, geared together to counter-rotate, with each one having con rods to the pistons.

Some people may remember the Neander diesel engine which had two cranks like this (elegantly discussed by John Robinson in *Bike* many years ago). This was a similar concept, but with Spam-tin pistons.

In my fever dreams this unusual engine had the valve area (and thus power) of a six-cylinder, and perfect primary balance (like the Velocette Roarer, February issue), all at the 135kg weight limit. And then I discovered oval pistons probably weren't allowed…

As I now remind students, when sitting any exam, it's always best to read the question first.

Anyway. The 2027 regs state the 850cc engines are limited to four round cylinders, with a reduction in maximum bore to 75mm. With any bore diameter restriction you'd always go for the maximum number of cylinders allowed, because airflow is the limitation here and we find ourselves limited by intake valve area. The corresponding stroke for these conditions (and thus the maximum engine speed) is 48.1mm – so it pretty much stays the same. Since we will likely have the same cylinder count, we can now use the ratio of the bore areas to try to establish an idea of maximum power, assuming the same ratio of valve-to-bore diameters for the new motors. Effectively the 850cc units should have about 14 per cent less power – similar to the change in swept volume, which shouldn't be a surprise. Someone with a well-calibrated back of an envelope has been busy here. So, there you go: 850cc V4 MotoGP engines will have about 260hp.

'Such technical restriction is a great shame and partly why high-end racing is so expensive and uniform'

The substance to Jamie's concept: Honda's oval pistons. This example is from the luxurious road-going NR750

Four cylinders will again be the norm and I'd be surprised if they weren't all V4s, but we might still see new technologies. I continually wait for the first bike direct injection (DI) engine, though increasingly it's technology for efficiency enhancement, providing limited benefit over port-fuel injection in terms of power. Another tech that may appear is the passive prechamber (a separate small chamber in the head containing the spark plug and which ignites first, firing multiple jets of burning gas into the main chamber, accelerating combustion there), as developed in other formulae – but with such a small bore it's perhaps an architectural ask too far.

With these rules I hesitate to say it will be business as usual, because that doesn't sound like an advance at all, and the engine teams in MotoGP undoubtedly contain people cleverer than me. But that's certainly what it looks like it'll be…

Such technical restriction is obviously a great shame. It's done to control costs, but evermore restrictive regs usually have the opposite effect – you have to spend more and more to make ever-smaller marginal gains. This is partly why high-end racing is so expensive and uniform.

If I could change one thing in the new MotoGP regs it would be this: instead of a maximum bore, stipulate a minimum stroke length instead. That would keep peak power speeds constant (the MPS thing) but would open up the possibility of making a triple competitive. Any such triple would have to have a big bore, allowing investigations of new technology such as DI or prechambers. Doing a quick sum, an 850cc triple with a 48.1mm stroke would have a bore diameter of 86.6mm, so there is room to allow designers some freedom without the power getting out of hand again. Perhaps that is what Honda were hoping for with their recently shown V3, describing it as being of 'about 800cc'…

Memo to the FIM: can we please have more freedom? Ideally, in true formula racing, one would have rules based just on fuel (or energy) allowance for a race, and anything else goes. This would drive power with efficiency, overlaid with the challenge of integrating any outlandish powerplant into a racing bike. And that is a much more difficult challenge than they have in F1…

Bike Next month

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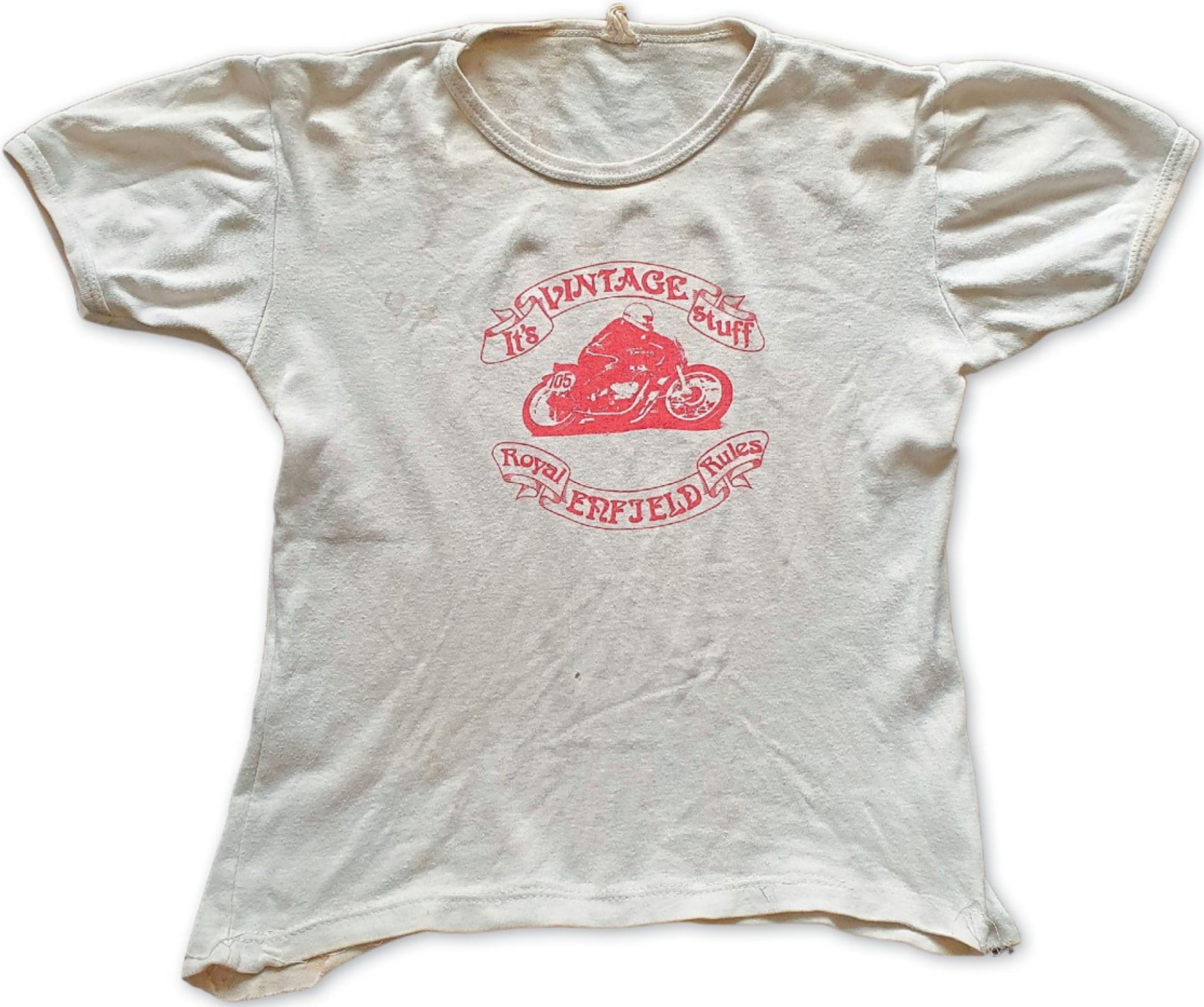

[BEEN THERE, GOT THE T-SHIRT]

'I thought it unfair that Steve was held back – but he went on to win'

This T-shirt resurfaced during a recent tidy-up. It was bought for me by my sister Sarah and future brother-in-law David Burrows in the early 1970s when we went to Cadwell Park to watch their friend Steve Linsdell. The final race of the day was a scratch handicap and I thought it most unfair that Steve was held back until everyone else had disappeared. But he went on to win.
Dan Austin, Maulden, Bedfordshire

IF YOU'VE GOT AN OLD T-SHIRT LIKE DAN'S AND FANCY SEEING IT IN *BIKE*, TAKE A PICTURE OF THE *WHOLE* SHIRT, ARMS INCLUDED, AND EMAIL IT TO THE ADDRESS AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE. IF WE PUBLISH IT WE'LL SEND YOU A NEW T-SHIRT.

[RIP OWEN]

Owen Jenner

It is with immense sadness that we report the passing of Owen Jenner. Winner of the 2020 British Junior Supersport series, 2023 British Junior Superstock title and 2024 British GP2 championship, 21-year-old Owen had joined *Bike*-supported Rapid Honda for this year. We rode flat track with him over winter and attended preseason testing, and were as impressed by his enthusiasm, charm and ever-present grin as his obviously massive talent on a bike. Owen lost his life from injuries sustained in a multi-rider incident in a British Supersport race at Oulton Park on 5 May. Our deepest condolences to his family, friends and team.

Our sympathy too for the families and friends of Shane Richardson, who also sadly lost his life in the incident, and Tom Tunstall, who was severely injured.

In Ixion's wheel tracks

I very much enjoyed your article featuring Ixion (Canon Basil Davies) and his exploits in the early 1900s (*Bike*, June). I am privileged to say I am his great grandson and have followed in his footsteps, having owned more than 35 bikes in recent years. I am always looking for new stories and articles about him, and was delighted to see such detail in your article.

When I was 16, I told my mother I was going out to buy my first motorcycle. She was extremely disappointed, but my reply had no comeback when I told her 'sorry, it's in my blood'.

Alex Porter, Marlborough

Endurance!

Thank you for the article on Team Bike's glorious years competing in endurance racing in the 1980s (*Bike*, June). It brought back tremendous memories for me as I was briefly involved, albeit with another team, run by a Brit abroad.

The team was Eurac, based in Cherbourg, and the Brit was Chris Waterman. I was working for a ferry company running freight to Cherbourg from Poole. Chris and I became close friends. I used to send my Kawasaki Z1000 to him for servicing and fettling – he would collect it from the ferry (very relaxed in those days).

My late brother and I helped in the pits at Spa, Le Mans and Paul Ricard. Fantastic, youthful days.

Bike continues to be a shining beacon. Keep up the good work.

Steve James

You'll find Chris on page 50. MA

PIC: GEOFF MORRIS

Ixion. Inspiring his family 120 years later

Top riding tips

As a relatively new rider I'm always keen to pick up new tips. So, I soaked up all 52 in the June issue.

Tip 35 – 'riding on the road isn't a war, it's a dance' – is a game changer. It's altered my perspective of fellow road users, and I am much less Angry Biker and more Fred Astaire. I'm way more relaxed, gracefully side-stepping other drivers rather than looking out for an ambush. Thanks, *Bike*.

Nick Voaden

Excellent issue

Another excellent magazine this month (*Bike*, June). So many good reviews and interviews, all well written, compiled and presented.

In particular, another excellent article by Jamie Turner. Amazing photographs, and the drawing of the single-valve aero engine is a fine inclusion. So much can be learned from his carefully written, information-packed articles.

And well done Ed Armitage for passing your A2 licence (and very nicely written, too).

I feel it's important you all know that you produce an ace magazine. I appreciate this is the result of a lot of effort, typing, and article checking before publication.

Steve Hearn, Suffolk

Ed's the man

What a fine writer Ed Armitage is – far better than his dad.

At such a young age to have turns of phrase such as 'a parchment bike licence back in the olden days' and 'like a tarmac tennis court, but without the net and grunting' (*Bike*, June), he clearly has a future in biking journalism, if not any journalism.

I hope you pay him more than the living wage.

Andi Holland, Cheltenham

Hang on, he wants paying? Once he's tidied his room, etc, etc… MA

Same again, please

History in the making (*Bike*, May) was one of the best articles I've read in any publication for a very long time. In fact, it's pretty much the only article in any magazine that I read twice. More from this correspondent, please.

Drew Woodcock

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facebook.com/bikemagazineUK twitter.com/BikeMagazine

Way ahead of its time

With two of my bikes (Triumph Thunderbird 900 and Moto Guzzi V11 Sport) recently featuring in Mark Graham's excellent *Ahead of its time* tailpiece, I can only conclude I must be a visionary.

But for a standout machine clearly ahead of its time, I propose the Moto Guzzi Motoleggera. Load-separating suspension at the front, modern geometry on the swingarm, 'ram air' orientation for the carb, and poor man's cruise control – and all this in 1954.

I call her Kate – anything steeper than about 1:20 and you're 'running up that hill' alongside.

Rick Stevenson

Rick's Guzzi. Look at it and smile – unless you're in the Pennines

Manoeuvring tests

After chatting to a few lads of my generation at Stafford Show, we agreed the thing that makes our hobby possible in older age is lightweight bikes. This is why the newer 400cc models are popular with us older riders – they feel safer and more manageable.

You should consider a 'shed test' as part of the write-ups and design a simple fixed course for grading how easy is it to manoeuvre a bike (not its top speed).

Can you get it safely out of a garden shed? Three-point turn it on wet grass? Push it up a garden path through a gated alley on to a gravel drive? Push it up a gentle uphill section to a road to start it?

These scenarios are typical for many of us before going for a ride – not everyone is blessed with a double garage and flat drive with direct access to the road.

Paul Harvey

All fine ideas. However, our health and safety clipboard operators are worried about us creaky fools going anywhere near wet grass. MA

Did my trip proud

Many thanks for running my article on *Hunting for the big three* (*Bike*, June). You did it proud – as am I to have written something for your hallowed pages.

On the subject of writing, John Westlake's test of the CFMoto 450MT (*Bike*, March) was excellent. In my North Devon pocket money days we used to watch the bikes at night taking on the infamous Beggars Roost stage of the Land's End trial. Epic stuff.

Harry Farthing

Kevin's Fireblade. We like being blamed for buys like this

It's all Mike's fault

If Mike Armitage hadn't been telling us how great his GSX-R750 is and reliving his youth in the pages of *Bike*, I wouldn't have thought: '1990s sportsbikes were really good. I could do that…'

So, I started looking about – and the choice is amazing. After some comfortable evenings surfing eBay, I found a 1995 Fireblade, complete with smaller front wheel. It may not have a genuine colour scheme but it's just fantastic. I'd forgotten how good these bikes are.

I like the tech and gizmos of the modern stuff, but can't get over that they're computers on wheels. A 30-year-old Fireblade more than holds its own in the real world.

But I'm still blaming Mike for making me buy it.

Kevin Harvey

Chrome / Brass Quick Release Fuel Line Connectors (TÜV SÜD & ISO 9001-2015 accredited)
BMW – Ducati – MV Agusta – Triumph
Replaces the brittle plastic connectors:
E5 & E10 Fuel Compatible
Secure the Flow: www.ducati.tech

Naked value

Want maximum fun from your finances? We send three high value hotshots to Grimsby – home of Britain's best-value fish and chips…

By **John Westlake** Photography **Adam Shorrock**

Judging value is a tricky business because – contrary to what Mr Aldi will have you believe – there's much more involved than cheapness. If it were that simple we would have all been tooling round on shonky knock-off 500s for years and you'd never see a BMW R1300GS. For a motorcycle to be good value it has to meet your expectations for the money. For it to be great value, it has to far exceed them.

Which brings us to our trio of naked bargain-meisters. The BSA Gold Star promises classic style, modern performance and sky-high garage appeal for £90 less than a BMW G310GS. At the other end of the performance scale, Honda's CB1000 Hornet SP seems to give everything a Yamaha MT-10 SP or KTM 1390 Super Duke offers, for £5000 less. And somewhere in between is the £8799 Morbidelli C1002V – a 1000cc V-twin built to Japanese standards costing a third the price of the Ducati Diavel it's clearly inspired by.

So, which is the best value? And are crucial corners being cut? Answering these vexing questions will require a massive intake of omega-3 fatty acids – so we spend two days pinballing around the Lincolnshire Wolds in search of Britain's best-value chip shops…

£5799 Gold Star, £10,099 CB1000 Hornet SP, £8799 C1002V. All amazing value, but which is best?

Honda CB1000 Hornet SP

Undercutting supernaked rivals by £1000s, the 155bhp Hornet seems like phenomenal value. But have corners been cut?

Dinky screen bizarrely effective. As are the gold wheels. Phwoar

15:00
0
mph
N
QS

Proof Honda should make bikes, not draw them: odd icon top left is sport mode

ÖHLINS
TTX TECHNOLOGY

Where most of your money goes. Ride quality is delicious

Britain's best-value chippies are all in Grimsby, according to the internet – Mathews Chippy, for example, serves up a regular haddock and chips for a barely believable £3. Destination sorted. We'll spend a day in the Lincolnshire Wolds then head over to Grimsby on day two. I fire up the Hornet and lead our eclectic group out for a brief motorway haul before heading east.

Contrary to all the excited gibbering from *Bike*'s road testers about the new Hornet SP, my first impression is underwhelming. Droning up the A1, it's as civilised and slick as any Honda, but the rider's view is uninspiring – switchgear from the NC750 commuter, nondescript yokes, black bar risers, standard Honda 5in TFT, same Showa forks as the standard Hornet… it's all very neat but doesn't feel remotely special. And no cruise control.

The wind protection is spookily good for a naked bike though. The tiny screen above the headlights and the back of the TFT somehow deflect most of the wind off your body, leaving your head in a turbulence-free zone. You'd think the similarly naked BSA would feel the same but on that your entire body is out in the breeze – the Hornet is much easier work.

Within six seconds of turning off the A1, my opinion shifts. Because it feels so Hondary, I presumed the power delivery would follow suit. My old CB1000R did – it made 140bhp feel sensible. Not this CB. The midrange is as strong as you'd hope, but at 7000rpm the retuned 2017 Fireblade engine gulps down six espressos and sprints off down the street waving its front wheel in the air. It feels naughty in a way the old CB never did.

Weirdly though, the height of front wheel loftage seems random. The following day I'm riding the SP over the plentiful crests of the A157 from Louth to Wragby and sometimes the anti-wheelie electronics cut in with the front wheel barely off the ground, and other times it doesn't bother at all and I do the classic panic-throttle-close because it feels like it's going to loop.

'Yeah, it's erratic,' agrees fellow tester and *Bike* spannerer Bruce Dunn. 'And sometimes it cuts power for a couple of seconds after a wheelie. I suspect it's because it doesn't have an IMU [inertial measurement unit – a gyroscope gizmo that Honda didn't use in the 2017 Fireblade], so it doesn't know exactly what's going on.'

> 'At 7000rpm it gulps down six espressos and sprints off down the street'

But this oddity is quickly forgotten when you hit corners, where the Hornet SP is so good you'd forgive it almost anything. It steers fast without feeling nervous, the suspension is supple enough for real roads but never feels anything other than taut, and there's a lightness to it – it just doesn't feel like a 212kg 1000cc bike. Maybe it's pulling the same mass-centralisation trick that Honda had got sussed by the 2017 Blade.

By the time we reach Grimsby *Bike*'s ex-art editor Paul Lang has had a chance to experience the Hornet on the gorgeous roads east of Market Rasen. 'I love it,' he says. 'I love the riding position and the narrow bars, the way it feels so light, the sound it makes when the exhaust valve opens at 5700rpm… I went everywhere two gears too low. And it's so easy to flick about and yet feels so stable in corners. I didn't notice the wheelie thing because I never wheelie – for me the Hornet has no weak spots. What a thing.'

Later that afternoon Bruce hops back on the Hornet and, quite literally, we don't see which way he went. 'It ticks all the boxes for me,' he says afterwards, checking the sky for police helicopters. 'The performance, handling and brakes are superb. But I honestly don't think I could own one. I'd want to use it and it would definitely get me in trouble. That's no criticism of the bike – I'm the problem, not the Hornet.'

I know what Bruce means, but it's not like a Hayabusa where you can do 100mph without noticing. And it's nowhere near as ludicrous as a BMW M1000R or Ducati Streetfighter V4 S. Okay, so it doesn't look as special as that pair, but looks aren't what the Hornet SP is about. It's about the riding experience, and on that front it is utterly magnificent – all for £10,000 less than the Ducati and BMW. That's remarkable value.

Only the Brembos suggest there's something very frisky beneath the black and gold paint

Pay for your CB1000 Hornet SP

honda.co.uk/motorcycles

» CASH PRICE:

£10,099

» PCP:

£1736.49 deposit, 36 monthly payments £129, optional final payment £5788.35 (4000 miles, 9.9% APR)

» OTHER OPTIONS: Base model: £9099

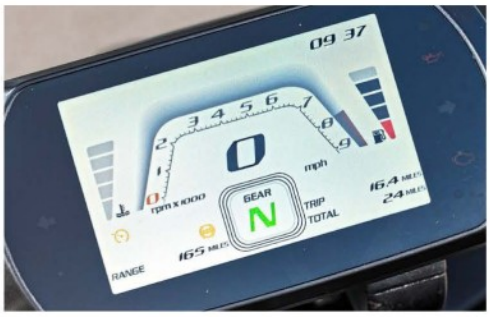
Pay for your C1002V

morbidelli.co.uk

» CASH PRICE: £8799

» PCP: £2000 deposit, 36 monthly payments £94.27, optional final payment £4962.25 (4000 miles, 8.9% APR)

» OTHER OPTIONS: Morbidelli T1002VX adventure bike, same engine: £8199



No obvious corners cut: KYBs, cast frame, beautifully finished V-twin…

Note the range – it'll go 230 miles between fill-ups

Foot boards pivot out the way. Shame that other stuff touches down first

Morbidelli C1002V

The dark horse, fresh in from China. Top-level build quality (really) for half the price of the equivalent Harley…

There's a rare moment of silence as we stand around the Morbidelli at our first coffee stop in Horncastle. Previous such contemplation of a Chinese bike would be followed by derisive snorts at the shonky finishes, mismatched bolt heads and ill-fitting plastics. But not this time – the pause is because we're all searching for a detail that looks cheap and nasty… and we can't find a single one.

This is some going, given the company I'm in. Langy wouldn't know a spanner if one fell into his half-soy venti frappuccino, but he's a motorcycle design aficionado.

'That's really impressive,' he says. 'So much more design effort has gone into it than all but the latest Harleys. There are no wires hanging out, no hoses visible – it's beautifully put together. If someone said it was built by Indian I'd believe them. It looks great from the rear too, with the huge tyre, integrated brake light and the tidy numberplate holder. More neatness.

'There's even an aero package on the indicators,' he claims, prodding at tiny curved loops on the end of the winkers. 'And are those machined wheels standard because they look like £2000 optional extras?' They are indeed standard.

Other tester Bruce waits patiently as Langy blows himself out. Bruce is a motorcycle mechanic by trade – so has a more practical outlook on motorcycle quality.

'Bolt protrusion is a pet hate of mine,' he says, turning round and pointing at several examples on the BSA where bolts poke out proud of their nuts. 'It indicates the level of thought that's gone into the finish. But this Morbidelli has none that I can see. The build quality looks and feels Japanese. It doesn't look budget at all.'

The Morbidelli's electronic kit isn't budget either. The TFT screen is easy to read, with all the usual rider aids – two riding modes (standard and sport), cruise control, ABS, and even tyre pressure monitoring, which can be constantly displayed in the

Imposing big V-twin isn't what springs to mind when you think 'Chinese bike'

corner of the screen so you can see the pressures click up from 39psi to 42psi as you desperately try to keep up with the 650cc single-cylinder BSA.

The Morbidelli's engine isn't responsible for this embarrassing problem. At 94bhp, the 997cc V-twin isn't the ripsnorter its 240-section rear wheel may promise, but it's gutsy enough to get you smiling. For a first go at a self-designed, self-built big V-twin, it's a solid effort – in terms of power and sophistication it's easily on a par with Harley's latest liquid-cooled 975cc V-twin. And it's economical too – more than 50mpg is easy, so with the 22-litre tank this means a range of 200+ miles.

'I know it doesn't make much power for a 1000cc motor, but I don't mind that,' says Langy. 'It's smooth, and happily chugs along – just what a bike like this is meant to do. And if you rev it, it doesn't feel like it's going to explode.'

And so to the C1002V's main issue: the ground clearance. Or, more accurately, what happens when you run out of it. Like most feet-forward cruisers, you can't lean the C1002V over far before something touches down. And that's fine – this style of bike isn't built for a qualifying lap. In fact, I loved the way my old Harley Nightster used to drag its footpegs at the slightest provocation. It made me feel mildly heroic.

The difference here is that the footboards don't touch down, despite having the ability to pivot upwards against a spring. Before they get anywhere near the deck, either a solid aluminium footrest hangar hits tarmac with a deep, unyielding thunk or – on the right – the exhaust goes down. Then, if you try to hold your line, it's just a matter of time before a slight rise in the tarmac hoofs the bike upright and sends you, at best, for a bouncy excursion into the Lincolnshire greenery or at worst towards an oncoming turnip farmer.

It's worth pointing out that we aren't being dicks, trying to make a cruiser go improbably fast. My scariest moment comes trundling through a village at 20mph when I gently lean the Morbidelli over to go round a 90° bend – the footrest hanger hits a lump in the road and doinks me towards a rather lovely 17th century cottage. Fortunately the J.Juan front brakes are excellent; the rear is rather hindered by the lever being in completely the wrong position...

> **'The quality looks and feels Japanese – it doesn't look budget at all'**

Pay for your BSA Gold Star

bsacompany.co.uk

» **CASH PRICE:**
£6299 as tested

» **PCP:**
£1575 deposit, 36 monthly payments £86.38, optional final payment £2711 (4000 miles, 9.9% APR)

» **OTHER OPTIONS:**
Base model (no silver tank): £5675

Sunny day, twisty road, Gold Star: heaven. Weird box on the left bar is a USB socket

BSA Gold Star

The back-to-basics classic-a-like appeals to an obvious market, but can it tear us away from the mighty Hornet? Oddly, yes it can…

Modern kit is cleverly tucked away. But no hiding that radiator

Traditional Brembos work fine. Pirelli Phantoms get a bit nervy if you press on

May lack refinement, but thrash it and it'll have you giggling

One problem with cheapness is that you often have to compromise in other areas. And so it is with Mathews Chippy in Grimsby: it's shut. A sign in the window announces he does indeed offer haddock and chips for £3, but Mathew evidently has better things to do than sell it. We pootle round the corner to the Blue Ocean Fish Bar which charges £4 for the same thing. No compromises here – it's available and delicious.

Sitting on Cleethorpes seafront, we digest bargain haddock and talk bargain BSA Gold Star. Whereas it's tricky to see where Morbidelli and Honda have saved money, it's far easier with the Gold Star. 'Obviously there's no TFT screen, riding modes or traction control, which is fair enough,' says Langy. 'But there isn't even a clock.'

I reel off a few other niggles: the right mirror vibrates at anything above 4000rpm; the fuel cap is a fiddle to unlock because it needs lining up before it will release (there's no hinge either, so you have to rest it on the saddle); the idiot lights are difficult to see in sunlight; there's no sixth gear so motorways are buzzy… the list goes on. Compared to the other two it feels like it's not quite finished.

But the BSA has some very important redeeming features. Heading home on the wondrous A153, I'm cruising on the Hornet, oblivious to the Gold Star madness brewing behind. The road has briefly straightened so I whirr along at a respectable pace waiting for the others to catch up – Bruce is on the BSA, but not even his elevated riding skills could overcome the Hornet's 100bhp advantage out of corners. He's long gone.

Then, suddenly, I'm buffeted to one side as the BSA booms past, Bruce flat on the tank, throttle pinned and sounding like the 1954 TT (when a Gold Star won for the third year in a row). I'm gobsmacked. If you happen to be an F15 pilot who's been overtaken by a Sopwith Camel, you'll recognise the feeling.

Thirty miles later we stop for petrol and Bruce is still giggling. 'Thrashing that is such good fun,' he says, fiddling with the Gold Star's infuriating fuel cap. 'It's partly because it doesn't feel like you're hurting it and partly because of the suspension – it lacks refinement so feels super fast.

> **'I'm buffeted as the BSA booms past, sounding like the 1954 TT'**

'You'd probably have to do 140mph on the Hornet to get the same sensation of speed. What a laugh.'

He's spot on. The BSA's 652cc single feels unburstable, which isn't altogether surprising given that it's evolved from the Rotax-designed unit in BMW's 1993 Funduro. Couple that with good-enough suspension, predictable steering, decent brakes and a shameless simplicity – no inertial measurement devices here thank you very much – and the result is a motorcycle that delivers entertainment under almost all circumstances. The exceptions being anything to do with the cold or wet, when the absence of weather protection makes it a two-wheel misery device.

Langy enjoys it, too. 'The Gold Star is pure fun,' he muses. 'On a day like this, chugging along, watching the countryside drift by, feeling the BSA thudding away… it's lovely.

'And if you want to thrash it, you still can, but all the action happens at much lower speeds. If I had a GSX-R1000 today I'd be going ballistic, but on the BSA I'm having just as much fun at 70mph.'

The Gold Star's riding position contributes to this alchemy. It strikes a clever balance between sporty and upright, which means you can lean forward to let the wind support you as the speeds increase, but through villages there's not so much weight on your wrists that it's uncomfortable. Later on we pass an original Gold Star travelling the opposite direction and its low clip-ons look crippling. It's probably why the rider doesn't wave back at us – his shoulders must have seized.

In a way, the BSA has the toughest job here as making a bike for £6299 means compromises stand out. But so much of the important stuff is right – how it goes, stops and turns, for example – that sniping at the manner in which its price is achieved feels petty. And this is the Legacy Edition; go for a base Goldie and their current promotion means it's just £5675 on the road. Also, we've found dozens of pre-reg Gold Stars on sale for less than £5000 – and at that sort of money those niggles just melt away.

Verdict

Picking a value winner from these three is plainly impossible because it depends what you want. After all, delicious £4 fish and chips aren't good value if you're allergic to haddock. But after much argument, all three of us agreed on a value hierarchy.

In third place is the Morbidelli. This could have fought for the victory but for its absurd ground clearance problems, which took the edge off every ride because you can never fully relax. It's a shame because in every other respect the C1002V is an astonishing achievement. The build quality and finish are superb, the engine feels smooth and sophisticated, and the handling is commendable… right up until a footrest hanger gouges chunks out of the B1203.

Splitting the Honda and BSA is bizarrely difficult, given their wildly different performance and sophistication. They are both phenomenal value, but in the end it came down to one criteria: fun. And we all had more fun on the BSA.

The CB1000 Hornet SP is a brilliant motorcycle that offers extraordinary performance for £10k. It makes rivals costing twice as much look daft – if you're in the market for a supernaked, you won't be disappointed.

But if you want Sunday afternoon giggles at speeds that are unlikely to get you banged up, the BSA is irresistible value. Particularly if you snap up a pre-registered bike for less than £5000…

> **'If you want Sunday afternoon giggles at speeds that are unlikely to get you banged up, the BSA is irresistible value'**

SPECIFICATIONS	HONDA CB1000 HORNET SP	MORBIDELLI C1002V	BSA GOLD STAR
Contact	honda.co.uk/motorcycles	morbidelli.co.uk	bsacompany.co.uk
Price (on the road)	£10,099	£8799	£6299
Capacity	1000cc	997cc	652cc
Engine	16v DOHC inline four	8v SOHC V-twin	4v DOHC single
Bore x stroke	76 x 55.1mm	92 x 75mm	100 x 83mm
Transmission	6-speed, chain	6-speed, belt	5-speed, chain
Power (claimed)	155bhp @ 11,000rpm	94bhp @ 7600rpm	43bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque (claimed)	79 lb.ft @ 9000rpm	75 lb.ft @ 6500rpm	39 lb.ft @ 4000rpm
Top speed	150mph (est)	120mph (est)	105mph (est)
Frame	Twin spar alloy	Cast aluminium double cradle	Tubular steel double cradle
Front suspension	41mm USD forks, fully adjustable	41mm USD forks, no adjustment	41mm RWU fork, no adjustment
Rear suspension	Monoshock, fully adjustable	Monoshock, adjustable preload	Twin shocks, adjustable preload
Brakes (f/r)	2 x 310mm discs, four-piston caliper / 240mm disc, single-piston caliper	2 x 320mm discs, four-piston caliper / 300mm disc, single-piston caliper	320mm disc, two-piston caliper / 255mm disc, one-piston caliper
Tyres (f/r)	120/70 ZR17 / 180/55 ZR17	130/70 R18 / 240/40 VR18	100/90 18 / 150/70 R17
Rake/trail	25°/98mm	29˚/138mm	26.5°/99mm
Wheelbase	1455mm	1665mm	1425mm
Weight	212kg (kerb, claimed)	262kg	213kg (kerb)
Seat height	809mm	680mm	780mm
Tank size	17 litres	22 litres	12 litres
Economy	46mpg, 172-mile range	52mpg, 251-mile range	58mpg, 153-mile range
Electronics	Five riding modes, traction control, wheelie control, phone connectivity, quickshifter	Two riding modes, cruise control, tyre pressure monitoring, ABS, phone connectivity, traction control	ABS
***Bike* rating**	9/10	8/10	9/10

More top value!

If you're not fussy about getting a 2025 bike, there are some extraordinary deals out there on new 2024 models

By **John Westlake**

You may have already perused the PCP section (see p66-89) and dribbled at some of the ridiculously tempting monthly payments. But for those of us who prefer to own a motorcycle rather than rent it using finance sorcery, there are plenty of other ways of getting an excellent deal on a new bike.

Obviously, buying cheap is the main tactic – left-over stocks of 2024 motorcycles being our prime source – but there's one other key factor to consider: depreciation. Buying a bike that doesn't depreciate much can work out cheaper in the long term than getting a good deal on something that halves in price the moment you wheelie out of the showroom.

Then there are non-price-related deals, which manufacturers prefer over price cuts because they don't dent used values in quite the same way. So, if you want a fully loaded Triumph Tiger 1200, for example, now's the time to buy because you get the full £1090 pannier set thrown in for nowt, plus free servicing for three years.

Here are the other deals that made our credit cards particularly nervous…

▲**Pre-reg 2024 Ducati Streetfighter V2 £2156 off**

Despite it being the non-S model (which tends to hold its value better), this is still a canny buy at £13,995 because it's been replaced by the new, lower-power version. That means you're getting the final Superquadro 150bhp, Desmo-valved job that Ducati dealers say is already becoming sought-after. That equals low depreciation. It's the same deal with the Diavel 1260 (ie, pre-V4).

More info: ducatilondon.co.uk

▲ Pre-reg 2024 Kawasaki Z900RS £2100 off
Most dealers we spoke to have already sold their 2025 allocation of Z900RSs, but some 2024 stock is out there. As with many bikes, colour has a big impact on depreciation, so you need the bike that people will want – the limited-run black/yellow one with Brembo brakes from 2023. This green/yellow with Nissin calipers from 2024 isn't quite as hot, but at £9999 it's top value.
More info: motorcycles.mandp.co.uk

▲ 2024 Yamaha R1 £818 off
Okay, so £818 off doesn't seem like much discount for a bike this expensive (it's £17,998) but several dealers reckon R1s will hold their money like almost nothing else. Two reasons: firstly, you can't get new ones anymore as road bikes (they're track only); and secondly, it's been replaced by the cheaper, lower-power, easier-going R9. If you want the full monty, you'll be wanting a late R1 – and that'll cost you.
More info: Sycamore Yamaha, 01572 501644

▲ 2024 Kawasaki Ninja H2 SX £6155 off
You read that right. 2024 versions of the £22,649 hypersport tourer are available brand new for £16,494. Not cheap by any means, but you get a lot for your money – supercharged 198bhp motor, loads of electronics, ace cornering lights and enough comfort for real two-up touring. If you want more bling there are also deals on 2024 SE models that save you £7350 off list price.
More info: wheelsmotorcycles.co.uk

▲ 2024 MV Agusta Enduro Veloce
£4505 off plus free luggage
At £20,000, the Enduro Veloce was a hard sell despite it being a tasty road bike. It was just too pricey. But at £15,495 including a full luggage kit it becomes far more of a Ducati DesertX rival (certainly on road) and may tempt some GS buyers who crave exclusivity. If you want even more cache for your cash, there are mighty deals on the 2023 Superveloce S – down from £24,000 to £17,995.
More info: wheelsmotorcycles.co.uk

▼ Pre-reg Suzuki V-Strom 1050DE £2000 off plus free luggage
Bike's road testers rated the DE as good value when it cost £13,999 because it's a solid bike and comes with loads of kit. You can now get the same thing plus panniers for £2000 less (ie £11,999). Okay, it's not as accomplished as a GS, but it's almost £8000 less for the same spec and the price cut should offset the greater depreciation.
More info: fowlers.co.uk

▲ 2023 Harley Nightster £3331 off
Harley's new breed of liquid-cooled bikes haven't sold as well as hoped, so dealers have old stock cluttering up their showrooms. Cue some impressive deals. At £9989 (down from £13,320), the Nightster suddenly becomes great value if you fancy a naked custom – that's Bonneville T100 money but with a lot more power and similar build quality. Get one before the tariffs kick in.
More info: blademotorcycles.co.uk

▶ 2024 Aprilia Tuono 660 £1855 off
The choice of the connoisseur thrasher. It's not only more capable than all its direct rivals (and plenty of bigger ones), at the discounted price of £7995 it's cheaper, too. Ideally you'd get a Factory, but they're harder to find. If you want an RS660 there are still some 2024 bikes out there selling for around £8500 – that's nearly £2000 off list price.
More info: mototechniks.com

ALL DEALS AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING

abba
3 Ton Ram

Abba Skylift: money, money, money well spent

‘Best thing I ever bought’

From boots and gloves to rucksacks and security – these are the high-value goodies we’d buy again in a heartbeat…

By **Phil West**

It's just a few scratches. They add character

They're the 'thing' that works so well, exceeds expectations by so much or outperforms everything else by so far that it's proved invaluable. The kit, bolt-ons and accessories that are standout items and, quite simply, amazing value.

From a two-quid disc lock cord to a £1200 tool chest that's lasted nearly 30 years, these are ten of the very best from *Bike* readers, staff and our tame panel of experts.

Mike Canham, Hockley

Abba Skylift

'I bought it in August 2021, directly from Abba Motorcycle Equipment, for around £475. I'd seen the Skylift at bike shows over the years and always liked the look, but never had a real need for one. Then I started doing trackdays, tinkering with the bike and slowly modifying it, and kneeling down while working on the bike wasn't pleasing my back or knees.

'I work in a single garage so didn't want to take up too much space with a dedicated ramp. The Skylift allows me to raise the bike to a height that is comfortable for me to work on it. Plus, I can remove both the wheels, forks and swingarm (with additional adapters) with the bike remaining securely held in place. Being able to work on the bike with it securely held, at a decent height, is a godsend – and being able to move the bike around easily on the Skylift's wheels is really handy.

'It's a very well-engineered piece of kit, extremely easy to use and ultimately versatile. My only bugbear was not being able to store it away very easily, but the storage system took care of that – and so I wouldn't change anything. Don't have room for a ramp? It should be your go-to piece of garage equipment.'

Mark Gaylard, Grimsby

Kriega R20 rucksack

'I bought it four years ago for about £100. I'd seen good reviews – try finding a bad one – but the main thing that impresses is the build quality. It's been over-packed but nothing breaks. It's not too big or too small, it's comfy, keeps you warmer and even gives a bit of weather protection, too. The additional strap pocket is handy for access to a wallet on fill-ups. I feel naked without it on the bike.

'The only thing I'd change is maybe an expandable pocket for when I have to get inventive packing.

'Apart from doing everything well and being built like a brick privy, it also saved me from the worst of a "smidsy" by taking the brunt of a landing and slide. There's a slight hole in it now but it hasn't affected its use one bit. The tug of the harness on landing cracked a couple of ribs but it didn't come undone or break.'

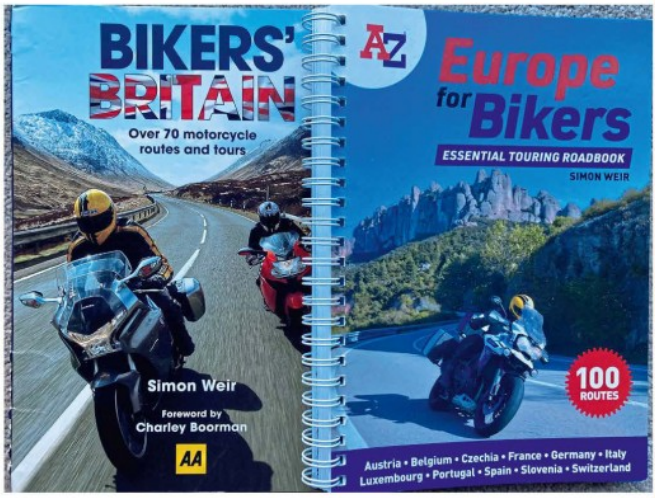
Kevin Fox, Derbyshire

***Europe for Bikers* and *Bikers Britain* books**

'I paid £10 for each from Amazon. I first had *Bikers Britain*, which inspired me to start riding further afield and, eventually, tour Britain.

'*Europe for Bikers* came a few years later and has been extensively used as a source of reference. I had considered signing up for a company-guided group tour to the high mountain peaks of Europe for years, but didn't see the prices being good value. This book changed everything – I now spend winters mapping great roads together using Garmin Basecamp to create a two-week tour. I'd never heard of the Route Des Grandes Alpes, Grossglockner, Deutsche AlpenStrasse or Five Passes Loop – now I've ridden them all.

'The books are inspirational, keep things simple with detailed insight, and have saved me a fortune.


BIKERS' BRITAIN
Over 70 motorcycle routes and tours
Simon Weir
Foreword by Charley Boorman
AA
A-Z
Europe for Bikers
ESSENTIAL TOURING ROADBOOK
SIMON WEIR
100 ROUTES
Austria • Belgium • Czechia • France • Germany • Italy
Luxembourg • Portugal • Spain • Slovenia • Switzerland

For anyone who has a desire to ride the best roads in Europe they are the best £10 you'll ever spend.'

Airflow screen: no need for heated kit

Chris Cope, West Sussex

Givi Airflow screen

'A few winters ago, I bought a worn but working 2012 Kawasaki Versys 1000 with a mind to slowly fix it up and ride somewhere far away. The same day I put down a deposit – before I actually paid in full and took it home – I bought an Airflow screen for it. It was about £150.

'I'd had one on a previous Suzuki V-Strom 1000 and loved it. I can't remember what compelled me to buy the first one; I'd tried a number of aftermarket screens, so it was probably just stumbling my way to a solution. But the Airflow transforms the character of a bike – especially an adventure-touring one – effectively eliminating wind disturbance. I'm one of those who likes adventure bikes for their ergonomics and comfort but use them exclusively on road. One of their flaws is bad screens, especially if you're over 6ft like me. I've ridden just about every adventure-touring bike and have never encountered a good standard screen.

'But the Airflow creates a large, wonderful pocket of quiet, undisturbed air – even at extra-legal speeds – and without creating back pressure. I'm originally from Texas, so it's in my DNA to hate the cold, yet with the Airflow I'm able to ride through British winters. No need for expensive, battery-destroying heated kit – just a few good sweaters. In addition to helping you keep warm, that pocket of air dramatically reduces rider strain and considerably increases the amount of time I'm happy to sit on a bike.

'I love the way it turns a decent, mid-priced adventure-touring bike into a ride-all-day, why-would-I-pay-more touring rig.'

ALTBERG
ALTBERG
ALTBERG

Great boots, great service. Satisfaction a 'shoe-in' for Ian

Ian Speight, York

Altberg Clubman Roadster boots

'I was issued my first pair as a police motorcyclist in 1998 and have bought a new pair roughly every two years. My last pair was from the Altberg factory shop in Richmond for £279.99 but they're currently £329.99. They're warm, waterproof, well priced, and comfortable enough to walk around in when off the bike.

'My latest pair had an issue with the way the zip was fitted – a bit was poking above the leather and rubbed on the skin, causing soreness. I contacted the factory, took them up there, dropped it off, went for a coffee in the town and an hour later they had been repaired. The cost? Nothing. They offer great service.

'They're great boots, are still competitively priced and have never let me down. The factory can even re-sole them if the sole wears out and the uppers are still okay. Buy some and you'll never suffer with wet or cold feet again. They're easy to put on/take off, are a great fit and great quality, and are a UK factory – with a made to measure service if you have big, small, wide or slim feet.'

Comfy cheeks at the cost of aesthetics? Priceless

Michael Neeves, Stamford

Spada waterproof overmitts

'I was halfway through a long ride, it was freezing cold and raining, and my waterproof gloves had given up the ghost (I don't think there's such a thing as waterproof gloves). My hands were so wet and cold they'd lost all feeling – the chap I was riding with had to undo my lid and remove my earplugs when we stopped. He was wearing Spada overmitts, over his heated gloves, and his hands were warm and dry. I ordered a pair immediately.

'They're brilliant. I wear them over all types of gloves to keep out the rain and cold. They fold up to almost nothing. For a tenner, they've been life-changing.

'Five years after buying them I've bought a new pair, simply because they've improved the design – my originals were mittens and the new ones have two fingers and a thumb.

'The only downside is you can't wipe a wet visor as the waterproof material just spreads the rain around. However, they're cheap, effective, nothing has gone wrong, and you'll never have cold or wet hands again.'

Who cares that they look like oven mitts when they're so effective

Kevin Fox, Derbyshire

Cekell padded seat cover

'Recommendation came from my friend Paul Simnett. I had looked at Cool Covers but they were expensive and bike-specific, and I'd seen one of these on his bike.

'It cost just £18 and saved me having to buy a manufacturer comfort seat. It adds much-appreciated padding, which is great for touring and long days, and helps keep some much-needed cool airflow on hot days. It keeps the seat dry when left outside and subject to overnight rain. And it fits really well.

'It's interchangeable and could be used for all my present bikes, and any future bikes I buy. But it's that good I've bought them for each of my bikes so I don't have to keep swapping the cover over. I've had it more than five years and it's still like new.

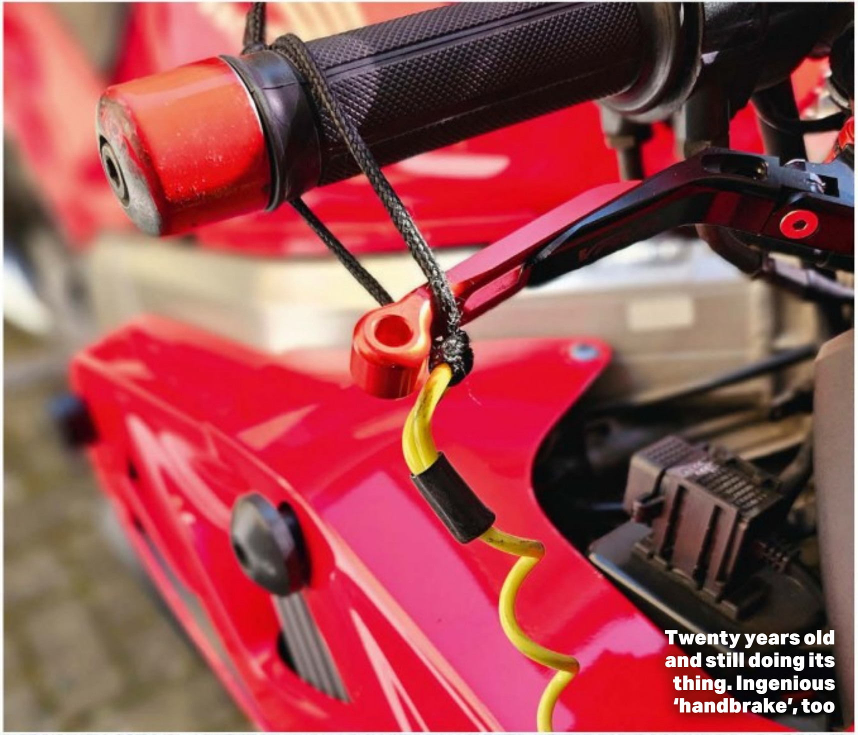
'It may not be to the liking of some as it doesn't enhance the look of the bike, but it's exceptionally functional. I wouldn't change anything – it's brilliant.'

Paul Richardson, Colchester

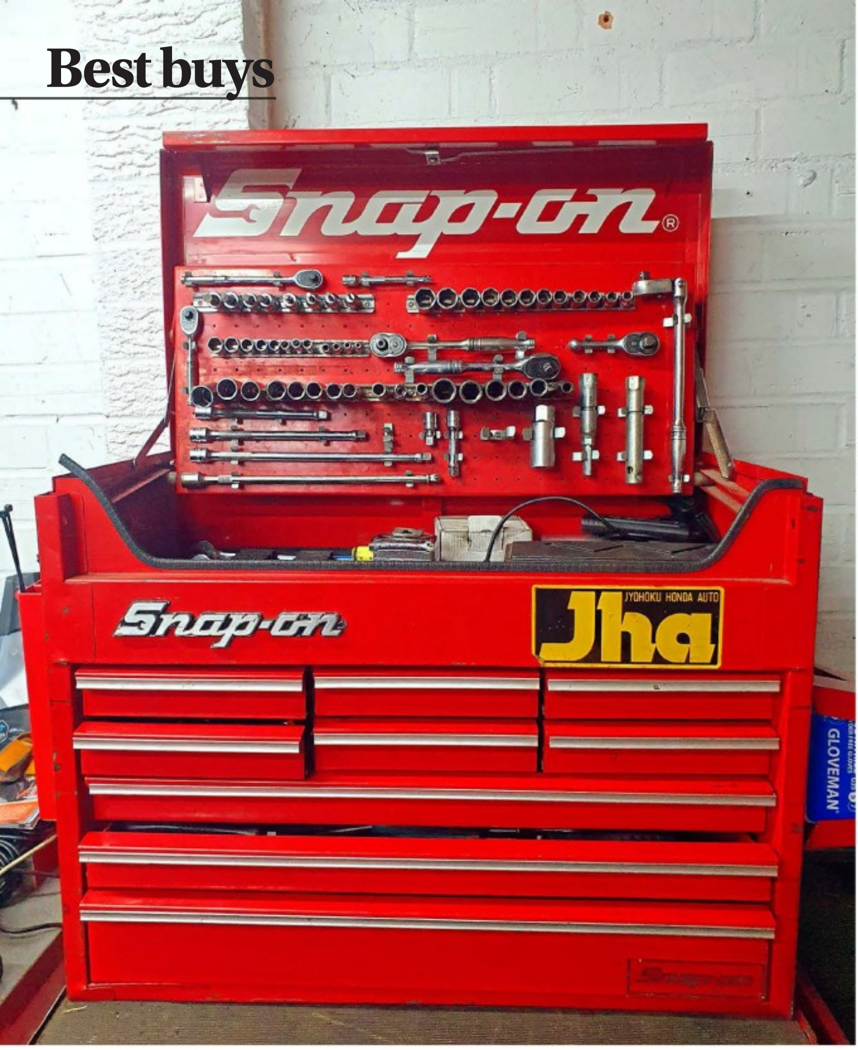
Oxford Disc Lock Minder Cable

'I bought it at the BMF Bike show, circa 2005. It was a couple of quid from a bargain bin. It simply seemed a good idea at the time. But not only does this cable stop me doing a repeat performance of wheeling my bike forwards until the disc lock clunks against the fork, it also has a cord on the end. This cord I've adjusted to be the correct length to act as a 'handbrake' for the front brake lever. This way I can be sure that when slipped over the front brake lever and parked on a slope, the bike won't fall off its sidestand or shuffle off down the road.

'The lettering has worn off and it's really grubby having been chucked under the saddle of many bikes over the years, but it's indestructible. It's so ridiculously simple and cheap and useful that I can't understand why anyone wouldn't want one.'



Twenty years old and still doing its thing. Ingenious 'handbrake', too



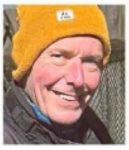
JHA sticker proof beyond doubt that Bruce has a thing for racing two-strokes

Bruce Dunn, Peterborough

Snap-On race tool chest

'I bought it in 1996 from the Snap-On van man when I was a bike technician. It was £1200. Two weeks later, the bike shop financially collapsed…

'Snap-On have a robust and reliable reputation with a lifetime guarantee. And still today the brand is the professionals' choice. The best thing about this particular design is when you open the lid it unfolds and lifts vertically a panel that offers ratchets and sockets that can be picked off without fumbling around in drawers. It serves all my needs perfectly, at home in my workshop and in the paddock at a race meeting. Nothing has gone wrong in 30 years of use, it's perfect, and still looks cool. The only negative thing I can think of is that it's so bloody heavy.'



Roland Brown, St Albans

Keis heated vest

'I bought my first heated jacket 25 years ago. I got this one 10 years ago for about £100 (it's now £140-£180); you also really need a power controller which is another £40 or so.

'It's proved to be light and compact, and importantly it's warm enough to make a difference. It transforms cold-weather riding and can be used on different bikes with a battery if they don't have the right power outlet. It did stop working recently, but it was a failed power cable and it's working fine again with a replacement.

'If I was buying again, I may go for Keis' Ultraflex jacket, which also has collar and heated sleeves, for a bit of extra warmth. But if you hate being cold on a motorbike, this will sort the problem.'

Keeping Roland more toasty than toast for a decade

Simon Weir, Norfolk

Held Air n Dry gloves

'This is my third pair, which I bought last year for £230. I trust the quality: they're the only gloves I wear for 10 months of the year and each set has lasted five years, which for me is 150,000-200,000 miles. They're unbeatable.

'Most of the time my hands are in the vented side – the kangaroo palm gives great feel and they're decently cool. If it rains, I switch to the Gore-Tex side with no stopping to find another pair. When it gets colder, I just default to that side. When it gets colder still, I turn on the heated grips. They're properly armoured and protective, superbly comfortable and last really well.

'I know they're horribly expensive but they're worth it. To me that's value for money. Before this I'd kill a pair of summer gloves in two years, tops, plus at least one set of waterproof gloves a year. So, five years from one pair of gloves actually saves me money.

'Quality and comfort are excellent, but after five years each set has eventually got 'Gore-Tex thumb' – where the liner pulls out and it becomes hard to get your hand back in. I'd also prefer them to be made entirely of perforated leather, or maybe a Gore-Tex Pro outer. The back is cloth, which can soak up water – and although your hand inside is dry, the glove gets wet and heavy. It'd be better if the water just ran off. Overall, however, it's the only glove you'll ever need. Well, for the next 150,000 miles or so, anyway.'

40,000 miles, and £46 a year. *That's* value

From the track to the road

New **Galfer Floatech Road brake discs** offer world championship brake technology for the road

Galfer, one of the world leaders in high-performance motorcycle braking systems, has announced the launch of an innovative new brake disc – Floatech® Road – which, for the first time, is said to bring the same technologies used in the MotoGP World Championship to the street.

The Spanish company contributed to the 2024 Moto2™ title of Ai Ogura through its partnership with his MSI team and says its new Floatech® Road system was 'born in the racing world and immediately established itself as a winning technology'.

Building on that experience, Galfer says it has now optimised the product to make it perfectly suited for everyday road use. The result is a brake disc which, it claims, 'retains its full Racing DNA, while also offering comfort, performance, and durability, essential qualities for those who ride every day'.

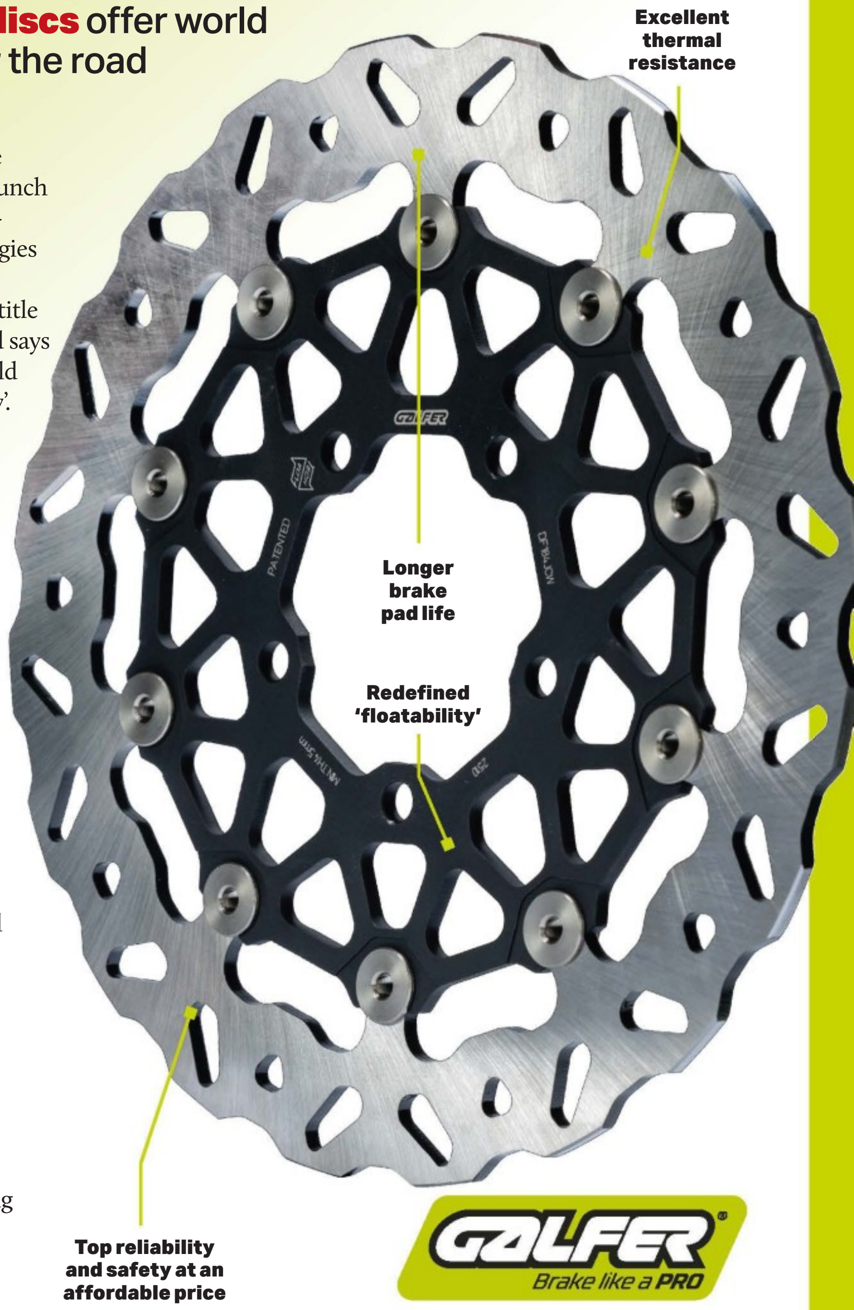
Galfer is a global reference in the development and production of brake discs and pads for motorcycles and bicycles. Since 1952, the Spanish brand has been dedicated to innovation, safety, and performance, delivering high-quality braking components trusted by both enthusiasts and professional riders.

Today, Galfer stands as a leading innovator in the field and serves as an original equipment (OE) supplier to prestigious manufacturers including Triumph, KTM and Ducati.

Floatech® Road was designed to deliver superior thermal behaviour and consistent performance, even during the most intense and repeated braking use. Galfer says its experience in MotoGP™ has translated into a safer, more controlled riding experience without compromising comfort. The disc is also certified under the ECE R90 standard, confirming its full compatibility with road use according to European safety regulations.

Galfer says this new system is now available to all motorcyclists who want to experience everyday sport riding with the same level of control, safety, and performance as professional riders.

» For more go to https://galfer.eu/


Excellent thermal resistance
GALFER
PATENTED
Longer brake pad life
Redefined 'floatability'
Top reliability and safety at an affordable price

GALFER®
Brake like a PRO

Five reasons why Floatech® Road is a game changer

» MotoGP performance for your road bike
The high-performance technology – as used in MotoGP – is now available to everyone, with the same reliability and performance.

» Redefined 'floatability'
Innovative design has resulted in a patented system that gives the disc greater 'floatability'. This allows the wheel to spin more freely, improving overall brake system responsiveness. It also minimises hub wear over time, ensuring stability and durability without increasing play due to ageing.

» Excellent thermal resistance
The track-developed design enhances heat dissipation and improves braking efficiency. Its innovative structure ensures a perfect fit between the track and the hub, delivering maximum efficiency and stability with every brake application. This ensures the disc maintains its 'floatability' regardless of temperature, guaranteeing optimal performance in extreme conditions.

» Longer brake pad life
It separates the pads from the track just enough to prevent unwanted contact, avoiding premature wear.

» Maximum reliability and safety at a more affordable price
Racing technology optimised for road use – offering top-level performance at a significantly more affordable price than racing discs.

CHEAP

FOR A REASON?

Chinese-made motorcycles have impressive specs for attractive pricing. **Chris Cope** asks whether they're great value or if you get what you pay for…

Photography: CFMoto, Lexmoto, Keeway, Kove Moto UK

675SR-R
RACING TRIPLE
CFMO
TRIPLE CYLINDER
BRAKE COOLING

From AJS to Zontes, there's almost a made-in-China motorcycle in the UK for every letter of the alphabet. Not surprising. More than 200 individual companies in China produce bikes and bike components. And, according to stats from the China Chamber of Commerce for Motorcycles, those companies produced 19.97 million motorcycles last year, about half of which were exported. Add more than one million exported engines on top of that.

All those Chinese bikes carry a stigma, however, rooted in the bad old days of poorly made knock-offs. US journalist Evan Allen tells a story about a 'pit bike-type of thing' his father brought home when he was a kid. 'It barely ever ran,' says Evan. 'And when it did, you couldn't get more than 20 minutes of riding in without the footpegs falling off.'

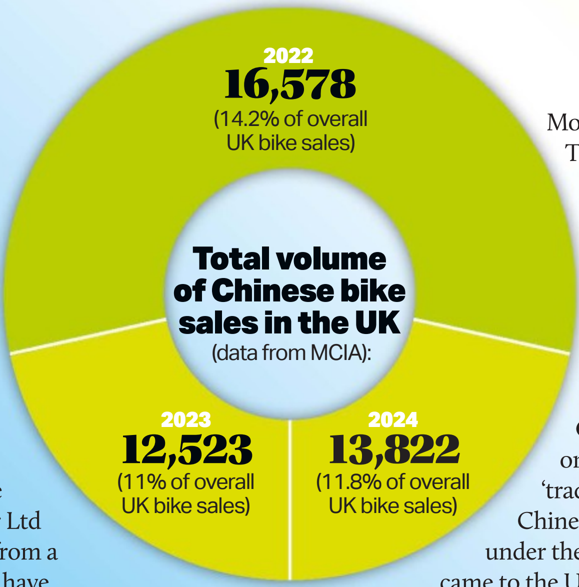
His experience isn't uncommon. But – importantly – it's also not recent. That story's from 2008. We still used tax discs back then. The iPhone had only recently been launched. And remember Basshunter? Me neither, but seems he was No.1 in the charts for five weeks running.

Times change. Chinese bikes we see in the UK today are of better quality and desirability than they were when Fabio Capello was manager for England. 'We've reached a point where we include Chinese bikes in tests and don't need to say "good for a Chinese bike" or have any caveats,' observes editor Mike Armitage. 'In fact, we've stopped pointing out where they're made.'

But old stereotypes die hard, and many riders still look at Chinese bikes and ask: are these things cheap for a reason? Sure, they're way better than they were – but does that really mean you should buy one?

£6699

CFMoto 675SR-R: trinkets-and-baubles supersporting for the same price as a Yamaha R3



What and by who

In the UK, five of the most attention-grabbing Chinese brands are Lexmoto, Qianjiang, CFMoto, Tayo, and Loncin. You've probably only heard of three of these, which speaks to one of the quirks of Chinese brands: they're traditionally really fond of rebadging, and this can make things confusing.

Lexmoto is the most successful Chinese brand in the UK, outselling its nearest competitor by almost two-to-one. Lexmoto is a British name – a subsidiary of Devon-based Llexeter Ltd – but their small-capacity bikes come from a variety of Chinese manufacturers. 'We have transitioned over the years from a cheap product company to, now, an established motorcycle brand which is holding its head high,' says brand and sales manager Rob Woolley. 'The factories we deal with now are some of the best in China.'

Qianjiang takes bragging rights for producing the UK's bestselling Chinese model. Its Keeway Superlight 125 has been No.1 for three years running. Qianjiang also wholly owns Benelli and recently resurrected Morbidelli (see p32). The Benelli TRK702/X was the bestselling bike in Italy last year, and their TRK502 held the title from 2020-23. Qianjiang also builds Harley-Davidson's X300 and X500 for Asian markets. If you are a dyed-in-the-wool Harley guy who didn't know that, find a safe space and give yourself a moment.

Such partnerships are common. **CFMoto**'s joint venture with KTM is one of the best-known examples of a 'traditional' brand working with a Chinese one. CFMoto's bikes were sold under the WK Bikes name when they first came to the UK, and the KTM partnership has helped them a lot. But despite attention in Western markets, CFMoto don't rank among the top 10 of Chinese manufacturers in terms of output. **Tayo** does. It operates around the world with names you probably haven't heard of, including Haojiang and Kiden, and in the UK their Zontes brand is consistently among the most popular Chinese marques. For a reason: in our February 2025 issue test with the Triumph Speed 400 and Royal Enfield Guerilla 450, we found Zontes'

Keeway's 125s are often the bestselling cruiser. Their new Benda brand (below) appears ideal if you miss H-D's old Sportsters

> 'We need to stop calling Chinese bikes "cheap" as this implies flimsiness. They are "affordable" – and represent incredible value'

Benda V-Cruise 125. The 302 version is only £4799, and the 500 (here in July) will be £5299

Kove 800X Pro: fancy electronics, titanium bolts, pukka suspension, 20-litre tank, 196kg fuelled up... blimey

Kove aren't just about adventure – they're in BSB in National Sportbike with their 450RR (ridden by Team Bike's Casey O'Gorman)

awkwardly named but very pleasing ZT350-GK Sports Café was 'astonishing value for money'.

Loncin, maker of Voge, is another of China's top 10 manufacturers. Like CFMoto, its reputation in the West is stronger thanks to partnering with BMW – they've built engines and components for the Bavarian icon for about 20 years. Today it produces all of BMW's C400 scooters and the engines for the F-series motorcycles: F900R, F900GS, F900XR, etc. And their Voge DS900X – driven by the same 895cc parallel twin used in the F900GS – is getting much interest from UK riders.

Who's buying them?

In the context of China's production, the UK's piece of the pie is teeny. In 2024 we bought 13,822 Chinese bikes, according to Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA) data. This is almost 12 per cent of overall two-wheeler sales, but the majority were 50cc and 125cc machines. So, most buyers are probably the same as those buying non-Chinese learner-legal bikes: young people, delivery riders, Londoners who renew their CBT every two years.

Further up the capacity ladder, CFMoto, Benelli, Voge and Zontes are major players in the 126cc-500cc class – a segment that increased more than 26 per cent last year. 'The [CFMoto] 450MT is a fantastic success,' says Stephen Dibbs, director at Poole Moto. 'We've probably got about 10 people who have placed orders, and we get two or three phone calls a day with people wanting to order them.' As if to emphasise the point, one of these calls comes in while we're speaking.

'The Voge 300 is also very impressive,' adds sales executive Jamie Nichollls. 'It's even got the right tyres for light [off-road] stuff. It's ready to go.'

They say the typical buyer is over 40 years old – often closer to 60 – and by extension, more experienced. They are a little more confident in their ability to assess quality, more comfortable servicing their own bikes, a little more willing to take a chance on the unknown.

This is supported by Stephen Cope at TK Cope in Colchester, previously a Yamaha dealer but who's bestsellers are now the Voge Rally 300 and DS900X, and the Benelli TRK502 – all of which are out of stock due to demand. 'All we can do is sell what we can get,

Happy customers

Bob McGeady, Shetland, Benelli TRK702

» 'I bought it from Tom Adamson Motorcycles in Elgin. I ran it in around the north of Scotland in two and a half days. On the second day, I ended up riding in a blizzard.

'I chose it based on looks and the historical association with the Benelli name, despite its Chinese ownership.

'I like that it's light to move around, the clutch is very light, and the engine is responsive in the midrange. Back-lit switches and an easy-to-read dash are refinements not always present on more mainstream models [of similar price]. The original screen is superb at keeping wind off your helmet, even at three-figure speeds, but there is a lot of wind on the shoulders. The seat isn't great, but I always use an Airhawk.

'I have not had any issues apart from rough fuelling around 2500-3000rpm, but that is not unknown. The TRK attracts discussion – and I've not had any negative comments. I'll probably keep it for a long time.'

Manny Villalba, Bere Regis, Voge DS900X (x2)

» 'Our previous bikes were two Aprilia Tuareg 660s [Manny and his partner have a bike each]. We had them a couple of years. We did two Spain trips and were quite uncomfortable. So, we were thinking maybe it's time to get something a bit more substantial.

'There were all the usual suspects – Africa Twin, Tiger, GS – but when you look at luggage options, crash bars and everything else, it starts to get serious money. I knew about the Voge [it was already released in Spain] and had been watching reviews. We both had a test and liked it. And when you weigh up what you get for the money, it was a worthwhile investment.

'We've not had issues. There was a software update, which sorted the throttle hesitation. Everything else works perfectly: heated grips, heated seat, radar, tyre monitoring – and the lights are as good as any *car* I've had. It's a pleasure at night. I'm well impressed with that – and the quality of the dashcam.

'I don't foresee reliability problems. Fit and finish is good. I'm not one for washing my bike – I ride year-round and don't stash it away. On the pannier rails, around the welds, there's a little bit of surface rust, but it's common on any bike – the Aprilias had Givi racks and had pretty much the same after a year.

'The bikes get a lot of interest – people know about them, and they know it's got the BMW engine. This is the future.'

and that is what's happening… as they're coming in they're trickling out. We have people who've been riding 30+ years and, particularly with Voge and Benelli, say these are up to the standard they're used to. We've still got people sitting on the fence who say "I'd rather see them out on the roads for another six months before I think of buying". But we've had customers who we sold Japanese bikes to for years, and no one's come in and said "I won't be seen buying one of those".'

Poole Moto have struggled to keep the TRK702 in stock until this year, when it's been overshadowed by the DS900X. 'The 900 has been a fantastic success,' says Stephen Dibbs. 'The level of spec has really raised the profile of Chinese bikes.' Perhaps unsurprisingly for a bike with a BMW engine, many of those interested are riders stepping down from the weight of their big GS. Many in that same group clamour for a 450MT.

But it's not all adventure bikes. 'Another one we're getting loads of interest in is Benda,' says Jamie. 'Loads of people are excited about them as they look mad.'

Buyers aren't only thinking with the left side of their brain: utility and affordability. Look at the Benda Moto LFC700 or Napoleonbob 500, and you'll see what Jamie's talking about. You'd stand out at your local meet on one of these.

So… are they any good?

This is always tricky because it overlooks so many variables. The quality of a bike is affected by an owner's riding style and their attitude towards things like servicing, cleaning, storage, and upkeep. Not to mention usage. Expand that nebulous question to encompass the entire output of a country and it becomes quite difficult to answer. But anecdotal evidence suggests that, yes, they're pretty good.

One reason the 450MT is in high demand is that it's been receiving glowing reviews, praising performance and ruggedness. In our March 2025 issue, for example, John Westlake chucked one down a hill amid the Edinburgh Trial. Actually, he sent the bike (and himself) groundward several times. It eventually became too much for John, but not the CFMoto. 'Bloody thing's indestructible,' he wrote. Similarly positive response from bike press and YouTubers is fuelling interest in Voge – 'I've never seen a bad review of the 900,' Stephen Dibbs says – and new-to-the-scene Kove (founded 2017, only arrived in the UK last year) have been winning praise here and in the US. Our test in the October 2024 issue declared the 800X Pro is 'every bit as good as, if not even better than, the Yamaha [Ténéré 700]'.

In terms of warranty claims, the team at Poole Moto says issues have been insignificant and rare. 'I've had no claims for Voge bikes,' Stephen Dibbs says. 'Our biggest issue has been supply.' (They're another dealer selling out faster than it can get it.) He also notes he hasn't had issues getting parts for bikes, and Stephen Cope says similar: 'Almost [as reliable as] the service we were getting from Yamaha. We happily sell the bikes and we're happy to provide good backup for them.'

Buy a CFMoto, you get a four-year warranty as standard. Outside the UK,

Most read Chinese model reviews

(motorcyclenews.com)

- **CFMoto 450MT**
- Voge 525DSX
- Voge 300 Rally
- Kove 800X Pro

Not as cheap as Chinese bikes used to be, but that's because the CFMoto 450 is pukka – yet still undercuts rivals

£4259

Not what pops to mind if you think 'Chinese scoot'. Lexmoto XDV300 costs £1700 less than Honda's similar ADV350

Small bikes make Lexmoto and Keeway the most popular Chinese brands in the UK. But CFMoto popped up to third place last year. Yes, the big bikes are coming indeed...

Qianjiang also operates the QJMotor brand; its bikes are sold worldwide, including European countries such as Germany, France and Spain – and in the latter offers six-year warranties on some models. Impressive? Yes.

Back in the UK, a dig through recall data from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency turns up no red flags. You'll find more recalls from traditional brands than Chinese ones, though of course they also have larger sales volumes and market longevity. This is not to say that Chinese bikes are completely without issue. Grab a magnifying glass and you'll see overall refinement still isn't *quite* there when compared to traditional brands. Switchgear may feel a little flimsy, or overall design may seem uninspired.

And this speaks to something observed over and over researching this article: many Chinese bikes lack that intangible something that makes you *need* one. With a Triumph or Moto Guzzi, you feel the people who designed them spent a lot of off-the-clock time thinking about them. You imagine they go for a weekend ride and take in what stirs their soul about the look, feel and sound, then show up for work on Monday and translate that into the bike they're building. Chinese bikes feel like they're made by people who don't get weekends off.

What the future holds

You'll hear comparisons between Chinese bikes and the history of Japanese manufacturers. Journalist Justin Dawes recently said: 'In the 1950s and '60s Japan was making cheap, inexpensive bikes – some were copies of other things – but they also had their own clean-sheet designs.' Until very recently, Chinese brands were more committed to imitation than innovation; they often still are. But as their industry matures – and importantly, as it becomes more interested in offering higher-end bikes to Western markets – we're seeing new ideas.

CFMoto have exciting things in the works, like the 208bhp V4 engine it unveiled at EICMA last year. Kove is winning the affection of better-than-you off-road riders, and Benelli fans eagerly await the arrival of the TRK902 Xplorer. 'Lexmoto's future looks good,' says Rob Woolley. 'We have survived when others have had to close doors. The likes of WK, Mutt and Sinnis have all gone, which goes to show this market isn't easy.'

The huge number of brands means others will inevitably fall by the wayside, but it seems the bad old days are gone. Chinese bikes are no longer the gamble they once were. Online-sourced 125s were ridiculously cheap 10 or 15 years ago because of both economics and shockingly low quality. Today they're cheap not because of component or build quality, but just because of the economic reality in which they exist. Chinese manufacturers have low labour costs and a concentrated supply chain. Depending on the economic thinker you speak to, there may also be some element of coordinated effort to undercut competition.

Yes, they're cheap for a reason – but that reason is no longer iffy quality. We need to stop calling them 'cheap' as this implies flimsiness; what they are is 'affordable'. And the bikes we're seeing in 2025 genuinely represent incredible value. Consider the DS900X. It has a BMW engine, KYB suspension, Brembo brakes, Pirelli tyres, cornering ABS, traction control, quickshifter, modes, keyless start, heated grips and seat, cruise control, dash camera, warning radar, tyre monitoring, power outlets and connectivity, all as standard – for £8499. Spec-up a BMW F900GS to match and it nudges £14,000.

Traditionalists may argue a lot of things are left out of that comparison. Dealer support, history, prestige, community, and other intangibles. But the bike that's in your garage is easier to ride than the one that's in your daydreams. Motorcycling needs motorcyclists, and if Chinese bikes are putting more butts on more seats – and providing a rewarding experiences and ownership satisfaction – they deserve respect.

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Back where it should be

Capable, different, superb value, Yamaha's **Ténéré 700** was a huge hit in 2019. Now this year's tweaks put it back ahead of newer and often cheaper rivals

By **Carl Stevens** and **Mike Armitage**

Cheery on the thrum to work, capable of unlikely feats on a tangled back lane and more than happy romping down the toughest green lane, Yamaha's Ténéré 700 had obvious appeal. Especially for the £8399 asked at its launch. No wonder it popped to the head of sales figures and reinvigorated the mid-capacity adventure market.

Times change, though. The Ténéré's success means it now has plenty of rivals – not just from established brands with the Aprilia Tuareg and Honda Transalp, but from a surge of Chinese bikes with reassuring quality, glitzy equipment lists and surely-too-cheap tags. The 700 needed polishing up – and so Yamaha have been buffing.

Have they made it too dirty?

Sportsbikes are usually 'improved' by making them firmer and faster, and adventure bikes suffer in a similar way. Manufacturers often give their bikes a greater dirt bias in the hope this attracts more buyers, even if the gravel car park outside the Slug & Lettuce is as close to off-road as we get.

The latest Ténéré gets higher-grade suspension, with changes to the internals, more support and full adjustability, plus a revised rear shock linkage with increased travel. There's alteration to the weight distribution too, with a redesigned tank and a new seat that makes it easier to clamber about when bounding down byways. And away from tarmac, the Yamaha feels more accomplished than ever, more accessible and easier to ride. As a friendly, fun off-roading adventure tool it's one of the best, and takes everything in its stride with its 21in front wheel.

But it's also better on the road, too. The ride's more supportive and inspiring, there's less pitching from weight transfer both braking and on the throttle, and the 700 is more refined at low speed – weight is still carried high up, but it's noticeably easier to manage at dawdling pace (outside the Slug & Lettuce when it's packed). So yes, more off-road ability – but improved on the hard stuff, too.

Surely that ol' motor is past its best?

It's been around since the MT-07 arrived 11 years ago and doesn't churn out numbers that'll steal any headlines. However, the 689cc parallel-twin engine

New styling, but still a Ténéré and still Dakar-aplenty

New TFT is a nice step on from the old so-so display

PICS: YAMAHA

has always more than made up for it by being both tractable and friendly, and torquey and punchy.

Tweaked to meet Euro5+ emission regs (new maps and revised intake duct) and with a fettled gearbox and altered ratios, the twin has lost none of its oomph or flexibility. In fact, it's now slicker and more usable than ever thanks to the new ride-by-wire throttle – the engine is smooth and easy, making it predictable and slick on dirt, great fun on tight, twisty roads, and friendly on a motorway.

Heated lean-aware riding modes?

There's never been much bling on the Ténéré. Partly because it keeps the bike pleasingly straightforward, and partly as it helps keep the price down. But these days even small-capacity retros and 125s are dripping with electronics, so the 700 gets a splash of tech. You get two riding modes, traction control, switchable ABS with a variety of settings for off-road silliness, plus a new TFT display that connects to your phone for navigation and assorted distraction. There's new joystick-managed switchgear too, with self-cancelling indicators that also give a three-flash lane-swapping function from a light prod. Oh, and tweaked styling with a new 'face'.

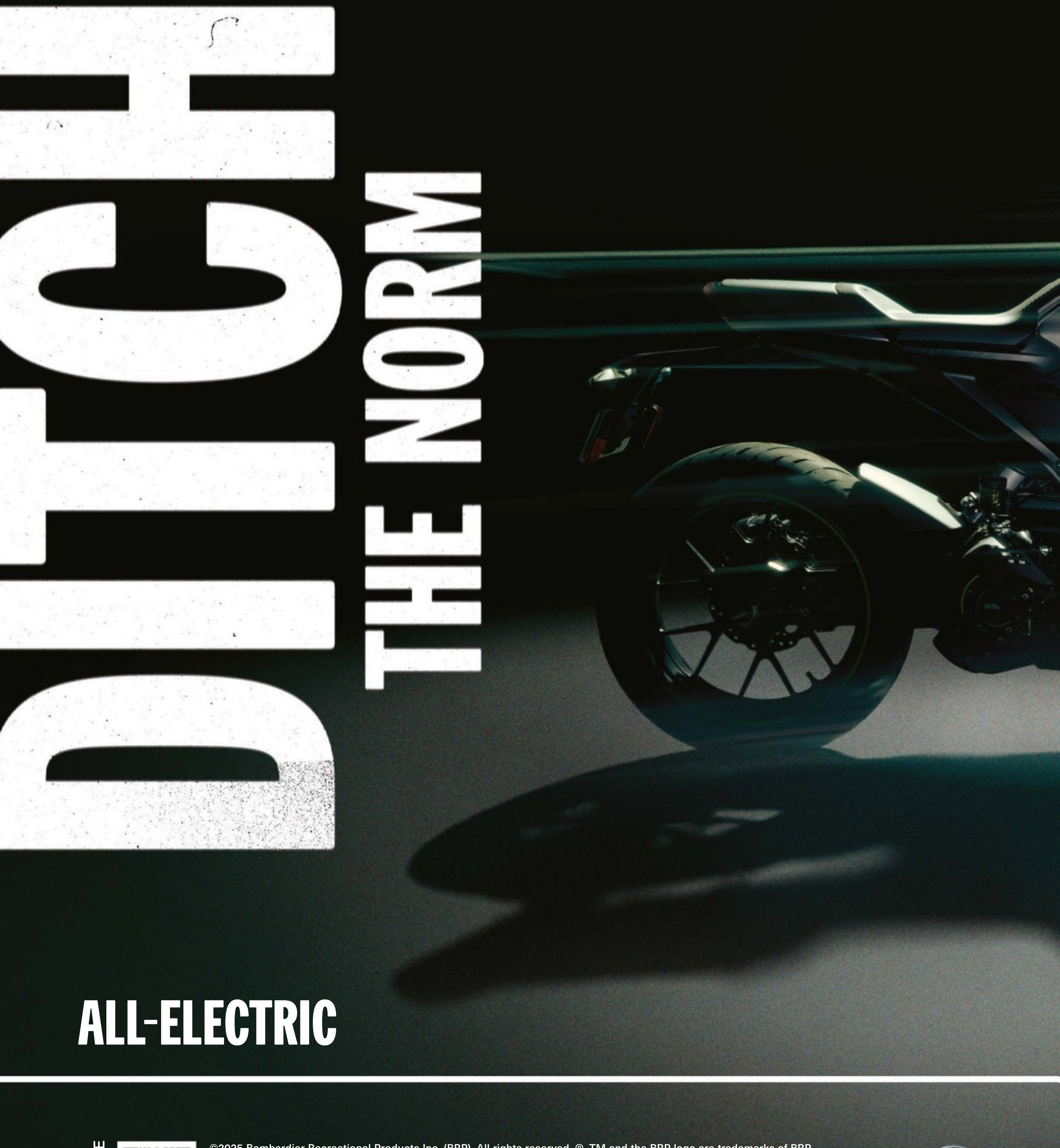
It's not the fanciest specification. The Ténéré doesn't have an IMU and so the electronics have no idea if you're upright or dragging the footpegs. A quickshifter is available, but there's no option for cruise control. However, the Yamaha doesn't feel like it's missing extra tech (although we all like heated grips, don't we?).

It also means the price is still most reasonable. At £10,404 on the road the revised Ténéré 700 is £500 or so more than a Transalp or KTM 790 Adventure, but £500 less than a Suzuki V-Strom 800DE. You could, of course, spend up to £2500 less and get a Kove 800X or CFMoto 800MT-X, both of which have more standard-fit equipment and growing reputations (see page 50). But the Yamaha still has that something. This is the bike that re-energised the adventure market, that's been bought in its many thousands by owners who love it, that doesn't go wrong and that makes a damn good fist of anything asked of it. Stronger residuals than its opposition, too. And it's now noticeably better than ever.

Savvy purchase indeed.

> 'Slicker and more usable than ever thanks to ride-by-wire'

The 700 in its natural habitat. But the funky twin is ace on tarmac too



UNLEASH YOUR RIDE

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TT practice week, 2024: a bit different to Brands Hatch

'The buzz of the TT is a million times more than riding a short circuit'

Davey Todd is as happy racing around Brands Hatch as he is racing at the TT. But he has no doubt whatsoever which gives him the biggest kick

By **Mat Oxley** Photography **iomttraces.com, Honda, Pacemaker Press**

The Oxley interview

Mat is a TT winner, endurance racer, author and MotoGP paddock insider

Racing motorcycles around short circuits and racing motorcycles around the Isle of Man are different games with a similar genesis, like football and rugby, cricket and baseball. That's why it's very rare for a rider to succeed at both. During the past half-century or so only a handful of riders have won a British championship and a TT in the same year.

Reigning British Superstock champion and 2024 Senior TT winner Davey Todd is one of them.

The 29-year-old Yorkshireman is therefore the perfect person to answer the big question: how do you compare the thrill of riding at the TT with riding around Brands Hatch or Thruxton?

'The buzz is a million times more riding around the TT than riding around a short circuit – if I was to estimate it, on average, about a million times more,' says Todd, wearing the mischievous grin that rarely leaves his face. 'I genuinely love riding around

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Superstock TT winner's trophy – and a neat 'tache

Cadwell Park, 2020, testing the Honda Fireblade

short circuits, but once you've ridden the TT, nothing else is the same, nothing else gives you the same buzz.

'In a sense, riding the TT sort of ruins everything else in your life, because once you've had that level of buzz and thrill, that level of adrenaline, you can't get it from anything else. I do all kinds of extreme sports – skydiving, bungee jumping, snowboarding – striving to get that buzz from something else, but I don't think it's possible.'

Todd made his Isle of Man debut in 2018. He scored his first TT wins last June – beating established Island stars Peter Hickman and Michael Dunlop into second and third in the Superstock race, then two days later winning the main event, the Senior. Todd and Hickman both combine the TT with British Superbikes, so no one knows better how the two disciplines demand different riding techniques.

'Gone are the days when people rode the TT at 90 per cent with a soft bike set-up,' Todd says. 'We're pushing. Up on the mountain you're riding as hard as you do on short circuits; you're sliding, you're getting your elbows down in a lot of places.

'For me, a 132mph lap is comfortable. A 135mph lap is something else. You're pushing as hard as you do at BSB but you ride the bike totally differently. You're not rushing into corners on the front, because that's not how you gain time. You have to weight the rear of the bike, take the weight off the front, otherwise the bike ties itself in knots.

'You can soften the overall set-up for the bumpy parts, but then you can't ride fast in the smooth parts, like the mountain, so you've got to learn to ride and adapt to a bike that isn't perfect in many sections of the course.

'There's fast, slow, bumpy, smooth, old surfaces, new surfaces… everything. That's what I love about it. If someone said we can make it all smooth like Donington Park, it would ruin it, because that's part of the charm and challenge of the TT – you have to adapt to the different sections and ride differently. That's why not every BSB rider who goes to the TT wins races.'

Todd – a bright and engaging conversationalist – started out racing motocross when he was a kid. He didn't know it back then, but he was preparing himself for the TT, which nowadays is basically 200mph motocross with slick tyres on asphalt.

'I'm a motocross rider, so I'm used to jumps and bumps. Some TT sections are bumpy as hell, like Ginger Hall to Ramsey. There's nothing on earth like that section. You have to ride it like you're riding a motocross bike; specifically, like you ride in sand – keep the weight back and keep on the gas – because as soon as you chop the gas, the weight goes to the front and you have a huge tank-slapper. You have to ride the bumps by wheelieing over them.

'In motocross you stand up all the time – you get told not to sit down – so I'm used to standing in a squatting position like a motocross rider. That's what you have to do around the TT – you barely sit down. People don't understand how little pressure you put into the seat. Even when you sit down you're taking all the weight through your legs and the footpegs.

'Going from the TT to BSB and back again, you've got to be able to switch your mindset and notice every detail about your riding, about what makes you fast, then completely change your riding style from one week to the next.

'At short circuits you gain loads of time by rushing into corners. I gain a lot of time by being extremely strong on the brakes and corner entry, but if I do that at the TT, I'll lose time. On a short circuit it doesn't usually matter if you sacrifice your exit speed because you're straight into another corner, but at the TT there's long straights after most corners, so you can't sacrifice your exits, you need to make sure your exits are very strong every time.

'And you're not necessarily riding on the racing line, because there's a manhole, or there's a really bad bit of road, or the camber really drops away at the side of the road, so you can't run all the way to the left side of the track before a right-hander, so you have to go into the corner in the middle of the track, which

> ‘Once you’ve had the buzz and thrill of riding the TT, you can’t get it from anything else’

Short circuits have fewer stone walls

is something you’d never do on a short circuit. You have to be aware of all these things.’

After this year’s TT, Todd will have to reprogramme his brain once again for July’s BSB rounds at Snetterton and Brands. But changing his riding style won’t be the only issue.

‘At the first couple of BSB rounds after the TT I’m genuinely sat on the grid with absolutely zero feeling inside me,’ he says. ‘I could fall asleep. I’m trying to get myself psyched for the race, but there’s nothing. You feel dead inside. The last two weeks have used up your next six months of adrenaline, so you’re sat on the grid and you feel like you’re sat on the sofa watching Netflix. It’s weird. Weird.’

Todd’s father was a motorcycle nut whose obsession grew even bigger in his son. ‘My dad has been obsessed with bikes since he was a kid,’ he says. ‘He never raced but he had road bikes and dirt bikes. From when I was born all I remember is watching racing on TV – that’s all that was on in our house. Motocross, supercross, the TT, MotoGP… I used to beg dad to let me watch the supercross from the US at two in the morning, so he’d record it on a VHS.

‘Racing was the only thing I wanted to do. I don’t remember a time I didn’t want to race motorbikes.’

When Todd was three his mum and dad bought him a Honda QR50 mini-motocross bike. He started motocross three years later, winning club championships, national junior enduro titles and graduating to national events.

Davey Todd CV

Born: 14 September 1995
Lives: Saltburn-on-Sea, North Yorkshire
» **2015** Thundersport Stock 600 champion
» **2016** 6th British Superstock 600 championship
» **2017** 3rd Armoy Superbike race
» **2018** 9th Senior TT
» **2019** North West 200 Supersport race winner
» **2022** British Superstock champion, 3rd Superstock TT
» **2023** 4th Supersport TT, Superstock TT
» **2024** British Superstock champion, Senior TT winner

'My heroes were Jeremy McGrath, Ricky Carmichael and Stefan Everts, so I wanted to be a motocross or supercross racer,' he says. 'But I had a lot of injuries and broke a lot of bones, which is normal in motocross. When I was 15 I broke my tibia and fibula; messed up the leg pretty bad. The doctors talked about amputating the leg and said I should never ride bikes again. My family were pretty worried about me losing a leg, but I was just, like, "can I race next week?". Honestly, stopping racing didn't cross my mind for a second.'

Todd didn't stop racing but he did switch from dirt to asphalt.

'When people ask me why, I say I needed to do something a bit safer, so I went to the TT – which leaves them a bit confused! Some friends had moved across to tarmac and did pretty well straight away, so I sold my dirt bikes and bought a 600, thinking how hard can it be?

'Motocross is a lot simpler – you get your bike, set it up and away you go. I thought riding a sportsbike would be the same. Definitely not – we were met with a lot of challenges.'

Todd started the process of switching disciplines by doing a few trackdays before his first road race meet, the 2015 season-opening Thundersport Stock 600 round at Brands Hatch.

'It was a weird transition, extremely alien. You have to get your head around the body position thing – in motocross you sit upright and lean the bike over; in road racing you lean off the bike with your knee down. I had these little goals set in my head: my first trackday, at Anglesey, I got my knee down; my third trackday, I got my elbow down.'

Todd won the 2015 Thundersport Stock 600 title, failing to stand on the podium only once – his road race weekend debut at Brands. No wonder several teams were chasing his signature for a ride in the 2016 BSB 600 championship. But all that glitters is not gold.

'All these teams were asking me to ride but they wanted, like, £80,000. Those numbers were insane to me and my family, absolutely no way was it possible. Then one of them offered me a ride for £20,000, which I raised through sponsorship and working. But they took my money and shafted me. That was me done. I'd gone from thinking I'd made it to thinking I'll never race again.'

The TT wasn't in Todd's plans, but his world changed forever in May 2017 when he got a call from World Supersport rider Tom Booth-Amos.

'Tom and I are good friends – we'd raced supermoto together a bit,' says Todd. 'He was at the TT with his dad, who was working as a mechanic for Sam West. He said: "You've got

ISLE OF MAN
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Smiling Todd is a merch seller's dream

> ‘I’ve always been obsessed with motorbikes and racing – I’m living the dream’

With Hickman at FHO Racing. Or actually not...

TT too much for BMW’s downforce aero

to get out to the TT – it’s awesome. You’ll be blown away.” But I couldn’t even afford a flight. He said: “Just get out here.”

‘I blagged a plane ticket and ended up sleeping on the floor of someone’s race truck for two weeks – no blankets, under a jacket, backpack for a pillow. Tom took me to the top of Bray Hill. We climbed over a fence and as soon as the first bikes came through, I thought, whatever it takes, I need to have a go at this. I got the buzz for it immediately.’

Word got out that Todd was up for racing between the hedges, so an Irish team got in touch. ‘They paid for the ferry over in my little VW Caddy van, which I slept in for four months. We did the Skerries, Armoy and the Ulster GP. I was just hooked and couldn’t wait to do the TT but knew I had to learn the course, so every day I watched onboards and borrowed my little brother’s PlayStation to play the TT game, to the point where I was second in the game’s world leader board.’

His first TT in 2018 started with a 16th place in the Superbike race and ended with ninth in the Senior. Impressive. The following June he was sixth in the Senior. When the event returned following Covid he achieved his first podium, behind Hickman and Conor Cummins in the Superstock race. But his big breakthrough came last year: Supersport and Superbike podiums, and Superstock and Senior victories.

A new TT force had arrived. All talent, obviously...

‘I get a bit offended when people say “you’re so talented!”’, he says. ‘I’m, like: “I work really hard, that’s why I won!”

‘Maybe I do have some talent, but I haven’t just turned up at the race and won because I’m talented. I’ve spent every waking moment for the past 12 months working towards this, or even the previous 29 years of my life. I’ve always been obsessed with motorbikes and racing – that’s where it comes from.

‘I’m living the dream. I used to say when I was younger that if someone offered me the minimum wage and said “we’ll pay for your racing for the rest of your life”, I’d have ripped their hand off. That’s all I want, to be able to ride motorbikes all the time.’

Todd has one target for TT 2025, when he will ride BMW S1000RRs for 8TEN Racing (Todd and Hickman are part-owners of the team) in the Superbike, Senior and Superstock races; and a Honda CBR600RR and a Paton for Padgetts in the Supersport and Supertwins races (he won the 2022 British Superstock title aboard a Padgetts Honda Fireblade).

‘Obviously you always strive for more – I want to win every race. That’s what I’m going there to do – otherwise what’s the point?’

NEXT ISSUE Four-wheel legend **Damon Hill** reveals to Mat how he wanted to be the next Barry Sheene.

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SCAN ME

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TIGER
SPORT
S1000

Bike

[PCP BRILLIANCE]

DEALS ON WHEELS

73 wallet-friendly ways to ride a new bike in 2025 – how does just £59 a month sound?

Cheaper than ever...

No longer must you stuff notes into a piggy bank or wade into the Post Office with a sawn-off. Thanks to PCP finance, riding a new bike has never been more affordable

Glistening new motorcycles are mega value. Pick any model from the 1990s, apply inflation, and it'll be way pricier than its slicker, classier, better-made, high-tech modern equivalent. They have never been so cheap. And thanks to personal contract purchase (PCP) the finance deals are better value, too.

This arrangement is a bit different to the old never-never way of paying things off, but remains easy to understand. In simple terms it's like this. You put a deposit on the shiny new bike, and the dealer sets a guaranteed future value (GFV) for it, taking into account expected mileage. You then make regular monthly payments for a set term, but crucially these only need to cover depreciation (and a smattering of interest) – the difference between the new price and the GFV. This means pleasingly low payments: pop down £1800 and this BMW F900R is £59.56 a month. You spend more than that in Starbucks.

At the end of the term you have three options: pay a chunk and keep the bike, based on its GFV; return the bike and stroll away as if you've rented; or give it back, choose another and carry on paying monthly. Bikes are often worth more than the GFV, and the difference can cover your deposit on the spanker.

There are things to keep front of mind. You don't really own the bike – it's the property of the finance firm and your contract assures them that it'll be kept in 'resaleable' condition. Return a bike with extra miles or a light dust of rust, and there are costs involved. But PCPs have flexibility, too. The examples over the page are three-year terms and assume around 25% (of the bike's value) deposit and 4000 miles a year. But all this can be altered to suit you. Hence the 'personal' bit in the finance name.

We've pulled together 73 test-winning, class-defining and simply great-value motorcycles on the following pages, neatly arranged by type of bike for easy comparison purposes. Fancy some blingy new wheels for the summer? Step this way.

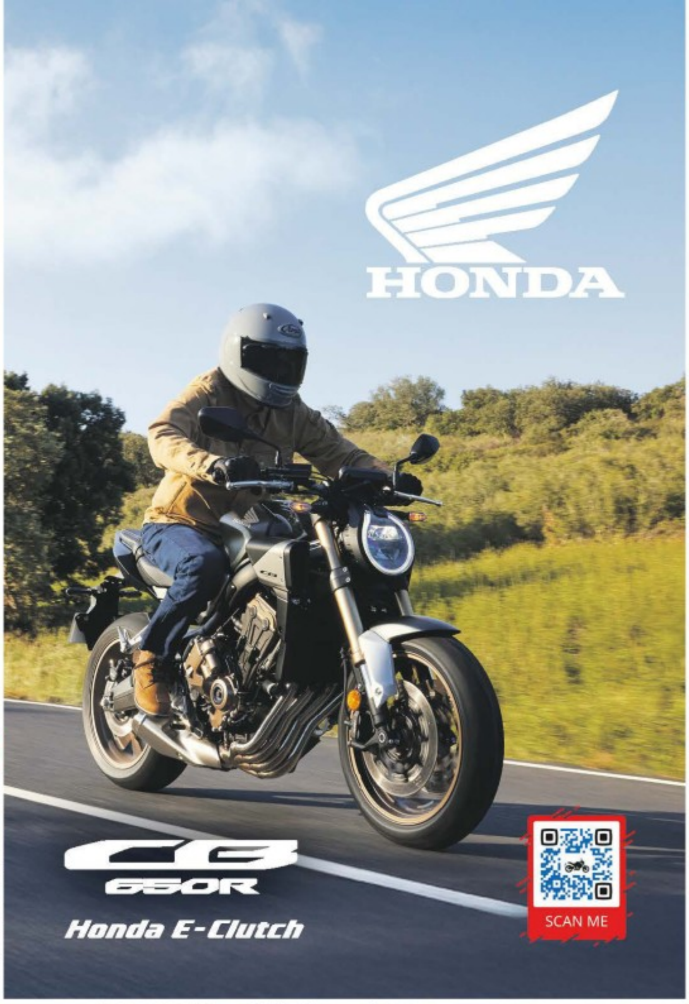
Mike Armitage
Editor

'£59 a month... you spend more than that in Starbucks'

All quotes on the following pages are correct at the time of writing. For the latest figures contact your friendly local dealer and commence haggling.

BMW MOTORRAD

CBR
650R
Honda E-Clutch
SCAN ME



Honda E-Clutch

This is brand-new, unique to Honda technology means you don't need to use the clutch lever when starting, stopping or changing gear. It takes elements of quickshifters, manually-operated clutches and Honda's unique Dual Clutch Transmission technology to bring you smooth, instant control, and makes navigating the city stress free, or carving a set of twisting corners even more fun. And don't worry. If you need to use the clutch manually at any time, you can. The choice is yours.

SCAN ME

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REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES		On The Road (OTR) Price*	Customer Deposit	Total Amount Of Credit	Total Charge For Credit	Duration	36 Regular Monthly Payments	Optional Final Payment	Optional Final Payment inc Option To Purchase Fee	Total Amount Payable	APR Represent-ative**	Option To Purchase Fee	Annual Contracted Mileage	Excess Mileage Charge Per Mile	Annual Rate of Interest (Fixed)
	24YM CBR650R (E-Clutch)	£8,799.00	£1,450.55	£7,348.45	£1,443.88	37 Months	£109.00	£4,858.30	£4,868.30	£10,242.88	7.9%	£10.00	4,000	£0.05	7.58%
	24YM CB650R (E-Clutch)	£7,999.00	£1,495.28	£6,503.72	£1,266.33	37 Months	£99.00	£4,195.99	£4,205.99	£9,265.33	7.9%	£10.00	4,000	£0.05	7.57%

Terms and Conditions: New retail CBR650R E-Clutch & CB650R E-Clutch (all variants) ordered with Honda and finance approved by Honda Finance Europe from 17 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 and registered by 30 June 2025. ***OTR** may be subject to change due to actual or unexpected changes in tariffs, duties taxes or other costs which may affect importation or other costs of supply. Subject to model and colour availability. Offers applicable at participating dealers and are at the promoter's absolute discretion (excluding Channel Islands). ****7.9% APR representative Honda Personal Contract Purchase (PCP):** Maximum deposit 35%. At the end of the agreement, there are three options: i) Retain: Pay the optional final payment to own the vehicle, ii) Return: Return the vehicle, or iii) Renew: Part exchange your Honda for a new one. You do not have to pay the Final Payment if you return the vehicle at the end of the agreement and you have paid all other amounts due, the vehicle is in good condition and has been serviced in accordance with the Honda service book and the maximum annual mileage has not been exceeded. Excess mileage charge excludes VAT at current rate. Indemnities may be required in certain circumstances. Finance is only available to persons aged 18 or over, subject to status. All figures are correct at time of publication but may be varied or withdrawn at any time. **Honda Franchise Dealers are credit brokers, not lenders. If you enter into a finance agreement with Honda Financial Services, the Dealer may receive a commission or reward from Honda Financial Services. This does not affect the terms of your credit agreement. Before proceeding, we will disclose the amount and basis of any such payment and obtain your consent. Honda Franchise Dealers may also offer products from other finance providers. In these cases, the relevant finance provider will inform you of any commission or reward paid to the Dealer. Your Dealer can provide information regarding these arrangements upon request** Credit provided by Honda Finance Europe Plc. Honda Financial Services is a trading name of Honda Finance Europe Plc. Cain Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1HL a company registered at Companies House No 03289418. Honda Finance Europe plc is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, Financial Services Register number 312541.

BMW S1000RR Sport

» £19,330 » 999cc four » 207bhp

» Deposit £3800 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £11,251.29

Inevitable that a ceaseless quest for incremental gains might at some point change the nature from ballistic and benign to merely ballistic. With more of everything for 2025, the RR is now über-epic – though maybe at the expense of a little cuddliness.

£206.63 per month

> ‘With more of everything, the S1000RR is now über-epic’

£135 per month

Ducati Panigale V2

» £15,171 » 890cc twin » 118bhp

» Deposit £3708.22 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £8485

Ducati make much of its lightness, and so it should – 179kg wet is commendably skinny for an 890cc sportsbike. Add muscular, flat torque with a peak of 69 lb.ft for boundless forward motion. Road-going loveliness.

£205 per month

Ducati Panigale V4 S

» £30,171 » 1103cc four » 213bhp

» Deposit £7375.13 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £17,213

If every ride has to be an experience this is plainly the machine for you. A performance envelope with its furthest recesses unlikely to be explored by even the handiest riders. The V4 S – sports paragon (with low APR).

£109 per month

Suzuki GSX-8R Kiiro

» £9599 » 776cc twin » 82bhp

» Deposit £2406.89 » APR 8.9% » Final fee £4867

Modest yet highly capable twin with a ride that gives the lie to its price tag. Reminds you what a sound decision you made every time it thrums into life. Good-looking too – especially in this limited-edition yellow.

£81.71 per month

Triumph Daytona 660

» £8595 » 660cc triple » 94bhp

» Deposit £1700 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £4821.25

Potent, well-rounded triple from the House of Hinckley; day-long comfy, engagingly quick, and beltingly good value. Wind it open in third, hang on till the needle nudges the red and try not to smile.

£159 per month

Yamaha R9

» £12,254 » 890cc triple » 117bhp

» Deposit £2471 » APR 9.4% » Final fee £6311.25

Hard to believe we’ve had to wait so long for the ace 890cc triple to manifest itself in a full house sports guise. Here it be: low mass, power aplenty, top-spec chassis, and hard to take your eyes off.

£149 per month

Honda CBR600RR

» £10,999 » 599cc four » 119bhp

» Deposit £1696.73 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £6220.13

Mid-weight sports pearl rewards precise, committed riders with a screaming hubbub, sublime steering and a contemporary take on the golden years of 600cc lunacy. Free trackday thrown in, too.

£319 per month

Honda CBR1000RR-R Fireblade SP

» £23,699 » 1000cc four » 215bhp

» Deposit £3945.29 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £13,100.30

Festooned with wings, modes, gizmology… and beneath it a nutso fast sports device built with HRC levels of love. Fierce if provoked, but friendly enough to be a daily rider. Free track package, too.

£85 per month

Kawasaki Ninja 500

» £6141 » 451cc twin » 45bhp

» Deposit £1116.39 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £3171

Few better A2-licence category rides than this. Top value, very presentable (get green), reliable as a hammer. Fine introduction to semi-serious motorbike riding for just about anyone.

£219 per month

Kawasaki Ninja ZX-10R

» £17,675 » 998cc four » 200bhp

» Deposit £3528.74 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £9776

So, Kwak's last WSB title came in 2020, but the bones of the bike that won six on the trot form the base of the current model. Fast, sharp, still got teeth, still a pant-worrying experience. Proper.

Aprilia RS660

» £10,450 » 659cc twin » 104bhp

» Deposit £2000 » APR 9.4% » Final fee £4993.75

Developing a motorcycle with bona fide sporting credentials that still makes it as a comfortable, daily ride is quite a trick to pull off. Many try, few succeed. The RS660 is one of those rare triumphs. This sort of power would have won a Supertwin TT a couple of years back, yet you can trundle to work on it. Love the MotoGP wing.

> 'This sort of power would have won a Supertwin TT'

£148.37 per month

BMW S1000R Sport

» £15,740 » 999cc four » 168bhp

» Deposit £3100 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £7993.77

£196.86 per month

Short of nothing and brimmed full of all the required ingredients for naked success; big power, arresting attitude, agility, instantly recognisable as a modern Munich product – and a wonderful thing to ride. Pukka job.

> ‘Brimful of all the required ingredients for naked success’

£59.56 per month

BMW F900R

» £9090 » 895cc twin » 103bhp

» Deposit £1800 » APR 0% » Final fee £5145.56

Butch-looking thing has decent shunt, quality componentry and a nifty chassis with steadfast handling. Not the most exciting, maybe, but ruddy dependable. And affordable – look at that monthly cost.

£135 per month

Ducati Streetfighter V2 S

» £16,166 » 890cc twin » 118bhp

» Deposit £3941.42 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £9215

Ducati are taking weight loss seriously. This V2 S is a hefty 18kg lighter than last year’s model. With an eager 118bhp in its delicate, usable, engaging chassis, this is serious entertainment. We like.

£225 per month

Ducati Diavel V4

» £24,171 » 1158cc four » 166bhp

» Deposit £5886.51 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £11,658

Cruiser? Hardly. This is in-yer-face wonder with MotoGP-derived wallop. Not the most practical bike, but it is the most outrageous take on what a performance naked can be. And indeed is. Fast, too.

£129 per month

Honda CB1000 Hornet SP

» £10,099 » 1000cc four » 155bhp

» Deposit £1736.49 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £5798.35

The big-value buy in Supernaked World. And don’t imagine this is some specced-down apology. Oodles of power, composed chassis, big brands, low key, subtle, but chock-full of dynamic entertainment.

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Credit is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 and over. This offer is only available through Kawasaki Finance, a trading style of Black Horse Ltd, St Williams House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff, CF10 5BH. Offer ends 30th June 2025.

£119 per month

Honda CB750 Hornet

» £7449 » 755cc twin » 91bhp

» Deposit £1040.63 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £3601.77

Honda know how to screw together parallel twins. Plenty enough horsepower with a fine spec, and can be had in A2-friendly format. Hard to walk past this machine.

> ‘Honda know how to screw together parallel twins’

£95 per month

Kawasaki Z900

» £9375 » 948cc four » 122bhp

» Deposit £1745.38 » APR 5.9% » Final fee £5364

What a stayer. Got all you could reasonably demand at a very fair price. It has no vices and the 948cc four provides plenty of urge. The sort of bike you buy with a clear head and sell with a heavy heart.

£139 per month

KTM 1390 Super Duke R

» £15,299 » 1350cc twin » 188bhp

» Deposit £3074 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £8776.25

Huge presence, big numbers, warpingly quick, and yet utterly manageable via a raft of effective rider aids. Hardcore, yes, but with a softer side making it truly everyday usable. Currently £2700 knocked off, too.

£99 per month

Suzuki GSX-8S

» £8299 » 776cc twin » 82bhp

» Deposit £2130.96 » APR 8.9% » Final fee £3947

One of few recent additions to the Suzuki roster – and one of the best. Eager engine, engaging chassis, fine stoppers, plush ride quality, put together well, and… best in class. Hard to recommend enough.

£225.38 per month

Triumph Speed Triple 1200 RS

» £17,495 » 1200cc triple » 181bhp

» Deposit £3500 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £8550

No shortage of power (more for 2025), nor lacking in go-faster technology either. Was always a bit firm and edgy for the road, but the latest semi-active suspension has smoothed it out a treat.

£77.94 per month

Triumph Trident 660

» £7895 » 660cc triple » 81bhp

» Deposit £1600 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £4156.25

Just because it’s the lowliest triple in the Triumph line-up doesn’t mean it’s some bottom feeder of a bike. Looks ace, goes well, likes a bend, and well made. Affordable too – look at that nice low APR.

£89
per month

Yamaha MT-07

» £7704 » 689cc twin » 72bhp

» Deposit £2071 » APR 9.4% » Final fee £3740

Oldest of all the mid-size nakeds, but back on the money after this year's addition of modernity. If you have an MT-07 under you on an inviting road in favourable conditions it remains top entertainment.

£139
per month

Yamaha MT-09 SP

» £11,810 » 890cc triple » 117bhp

» Deposit £3203.50 » APR 9.4% » Final fee £5588.75

Ever-giving, sonorous 890cc triple, proper suspension, class finish, seductive paint, one of the finest iterations of the 09 so far. Arguably the best price/performance/spec mid-size supernaked of them all for now.

£199
per month

H-D Sportster S

» £15,145 » 1252cc twin » 121bhp

» Deposit £3003.08 » APR 9.8% » Final fee £7897

Harley-Davidson's deep dive into the real world of bikes from the top board of the heritage lido. Oversquare, VVT, electronic assist suite, the lot. And a single front disc for a 228kg bike, so still a Harley then.

£74.99
per month

Royal Enfield Guerrilla 450

» £4850 » 452cc single » 39bhp

» Deposit £1097.13 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £1948

Pound-for-pound rival to Triumph's Speed 400 boasting an extra 54cc. Different machine to the one Hinckley has produced, mind. Decent engine, rest a tad more traditional. Quite vivid paint options.

£129
per month

Suzuki Katana

» £12,699 » 999cc four » 150bhp

» Deposit £3032 » APR 0% » Final fee £5023

Sharp styling, stupendous motor, a hoot on back roads. Suzuki's GSX-S1000 in retro-futuristic fancy dress is underrated – and 0% APR, too. Just plan plenty of fuel stops for more than short blasts.

£144.70
per month

Triumph Street Triple 765 RS

» £11,795 » 765cc triple » 118bhp

» Deposit £2400 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £6008.75

The finest version yet in a line of very fine three-pot roadsters. Matchless blend of poise, power and presence, and no longer just eyeing up the track. Not the cheapest but worth every penny in bangs per buck.

> 'Finest yet… matchless blend of poise, power and presence'

Honda CMX1100 Rebel

» £9999 » 1084cc twin » 87bhp

» Deposit £1853.46 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £5925.94

£119 per month

Take the parallel-twin motor from the Africa Twin (and DCT gearbox if you wish), give it a sporty bobber chassis, and you have a top-value, fun-packed cruiser. Great thing.

> ‘Top value, fun-packed cruiser’

£84.99 per month

Royal Enfield Super Meteor

» £6799 » 648cc twin » 46bhp

» Deposit £1580.44 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £3489

Friendly, cobby thing looks like it’d have its work cut out two-up with toothbrushes, but fits the bill to a tee. Motor’s a peach, chassis behaves. You don’t need much more bike than this to live the life.

£162.50 per month

BMW R18

» £17,480 » 1802cc twin » 90bhp

» Deposit £3500 » APR 0% » Final fee £8130.24

An unlikely prospect and therefore one of the coolest. Monstrous boxer plant in a chassis borrowing the best style cues of Beemers of the ’50s and ’60s. Top quality and 0% deal. Gotta love it.

£255 per month

Harley-Davidson Low Rider ST

» £21,295 » 1923cc twin » 114bhp

» Deposit £4112.75 » APR 9.8% » Final fee £12,285

Baggers are big right now and this is best of the breed. Torque-spewing twin provides seismic thrust, chassis well up the job, fully loaded or otherwise. Refined and classy, too. Try one. Seriously.

£199 per month

Harley-Davidson Street Bob

» £14,995 » 1923cc twin » 91bhp

» Deposit £2891.22 » APR 9.8% » Final fee £7846

Modest, blank canvas ripe for full-on personalisation. You can’t ask for a better baseline to transform into your very own version of a street rod. Mid-controls, bangin’ eight-valve V-twin, H-D best buy.

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GSX-S1000GT+

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Katana

GSX-S1000

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UP TO 7 YEARS WARRANTY
T&Cs APPLY

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Honda NC750X

» £7599 » 745cc twin » 58bhp

» Deposit £1023.74 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £4660.67

£99 per month

First of the clever (and cheap to produce) 270° parallel twins and still a force if you're after miserly consumption, relaxed ergo, and exemplary practicality. Still chirpy to ride as well. The DCT version is the one to have with a 'different' machine like this.

> 'Miserly consumption, relaxed ergo, practicality'

£155 per month

Kawasaki Ninja 1100SX SE

» £14,175 » 1099cc four » 134bhp

» Deposit £2567.92 » APR 5.9% » Final fee £7748

Emerged top of the pile in our April sports tourers test – with good reason. Smooth, agile, and with a ride quality that's the determining factor in its class supremacy. Top spec, too. And ace value. Winner.

£175 per month

Kawasaki Versys 1100 S

» £13,825 » 1099cc four » 133bhp

» Deposit £2659.99 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £7626

Wonderful engine, plush suspension, supreme comfort, and a very serious proposition if big miles two-up is your thing (pillion seat is ace). High standard spec with all you could reasonably wish for.

£159
per month

Honda NT1100

» £12,799 » 1084cc twin » 101bhp

» Deposit £2489.41 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £7149.74

Ignore all the prattle about it being boring and lacking fizz. The NT is a fabulous mile-eating motorcycle; a mega comfy-tourer with fine wind and weather protection, easy torque, much refinement.

£180.36
per month

BMW S1000XR

» £16,960 » 999cc four » 168bhp

» Deposit £3400 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £8719.04

If you take sports touring with more of the former and less worry about the latter, this is the kiddy. Think jacked-up superbike with bells and whistles. £1k deposit contribution and low APR as well.

£149
per month

KTM 1290 Super Duke GT

» £15,899 » 1301cc twin » 175bhp

» Deposit £3266 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £8861.25

Blimey. £3100 discount and 4.9% APR means a bleeding edge sports tourer capable of intercontinental travel at warp speed for really not a lot. No better balance of bonkers and friendliness.

£115
per month
SUZUKI

Suzuki V-Strom 800RE

» £9699 » 776cc twin » 83bhp

» Deposit £2369.46 » APR 8.9% » Final payment £4799

Strong engine, reassuring dynamics, duck down pillow comfort (for two). Ask yourself if you realistically need any more bike than this. Build quality on point, oozes character. Must be on anyone's list.

£105
per month

Suzuki GSX-S1000GT+

» £13,999 » 999cc four » 150bhp

» Deposit £3543 » APR 0% » Final fee £6676

Monster of an engine, and the rest very well up to par. The go-to machinery for lovers of trad' sports touring motorcycles. It's even a looker. Oh, and zero per cent APR at the moment. Strike quickly.

£105
per month
GX

Suzuki GSX-S1000GX

» £14,799 » 999cc four » 150bhp

» Deposit £3684 » APR 0% » Final fee £7335

Plush and impressive semi-active ride as well as auto-levelling for passenger and full bags. Smart. Plus, you get that legendary inline four power unit, decent ergo, proper handling and fine quality – all with 0% APR.

Triumph Tiger Sport 800

£120.70
per month

» £10,995 » 798cc triple » 113bhp
» Deposit £2200 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £6222.50

Looks every inch a serious threat to Yam's Tracer. Inspiring three-pot power, agile chassis, cornering elecs, quickshifter, 20,000-mile valve clearance service intervals… it's even been painted the right colour. Proper thing? Without question.

£90.07
per month

Triumph Tiger Sport 660

» £8995 » 660cc triple » 81bhp
» Deposit £1800 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £4845

As we laud the new 800, pause and reconsider the 'old' 660. Eight and a half for the littler version is some saving, the monthly cost low. And we all know it delivers senior amusement. Yes, still valid.

£219
per month

Yamaha Tracer 9 GT+ Y-AMT

» £17,004 » 890cc triple » 117bhp
» Deposit £3627.25 » APR 9.4% » Final fee £8563.75

Seventeen grand when the new Trumpet 800 is six grand cheaper, yet the GT+ is the standard by which you measure. And it has the auto Y-AMT gubbins, too. Truly the most versatile and fabulous tool.

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Cash Price	**£22,671.00**
Deposit	**£5,605.71**
Total Amount of Credit	**£17,065.29**
Agreement Duration	**37 Months**
Purchase Fee†	**£10.00**

36 Monthly Repayments of	**£149.00**
Optional Final Repayment	**£13,180.00**
Total Amount Payable	**£24,149.71**
Interest Rate (Fixed)	**4.77%**
Representative APR	**4.9% APR**

Contact your local Ducati Dealer to book your test ride or visit Ducati.com

Ducati Financial Services

Credit is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 and over. This finance offer is only available through Ducati Financial Services which is a trading style of Black Horse Ltd, St. William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff CF10 5BH. Finance offer ends 30th June 2025. The Cash Price shown above includes 1st registration fee and road fund licence. With Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) you have the option after you have paid all of the regular monthly repayments to: (1) Return the motorcycle and not pay the Optional Final Repayment. In this example if the motorcycle has exceeded 12,333 miles, a charge of 7.2p (including VAT at 20%) will apply per excess mile. If the motorcycle is in good condition (fair wear and tear accepted) and has not exceeded 12,333 miles you will have nothing further to pay. (2) Pay the Optional Final Repayment to own the motorcycle or (3) Part exchange the motorcycle subject to settlement of your existing finance agreement; new finance agreements are subject to status. Figures are correct at time of print and can be subject to change.

£69
per month

‘Right look, right feel, right badge’

Honda GB350S

» £3999 » 348cc single » 21bhp

» Deposit £652.44 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £1594.56

So little money for an honest, dependable, sweet runabout with oodles of Hondaness. The GB will take you far and wide without the slightest bother, for very many years. Right look, right feel, right badge. Right?

£143.47
per month

Moto Guzzi V7 Sport

» £9700 » 853cc V-twin » 66bhp

» Deposit £2000 » APR 9.4% » Final fee £4207.50

How can you dislike an utterly dependable 90° V-twin from a firm that’s been turning them out for nearly 60 years? You simply can’t. Endearing powerplant, decent chassis, subtle mien, lovely thing.

£137.02
per month

Triumph Speed Twin 1200

» £12,495 » 1200cc twin » 104bhp

» Deposit £2500 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £7077.50

Hard-hitting parallel twin engine in a sporty, accurate chassis laden with top spec niceties. Hardly a classic. But if this isn’t enough to stir anyone’s inner ton-up boy/girl/other it’s hard to know what will.

£95
per month

Ducati Scrambler Icon

» £10,195 » 803cc twin » 72bhp

» Deposit £2381.19 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £5104

Ten years ish since the Scrambler appeared, and it won’t go away. Reasons for this are twofold; it still looks great and it’s a better ride than ever. One struggles to call it iconic, but a classy thing.

£147.75
per month

BMW R12 nineT

» £14,420 » 1170cc twin » 107bhp

» Deposit 2900 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £7619.98

The full-fat 107bhp version is a belter; the (temporarily) strangled A2-compliant number is a smart way to mirror, signal, manoeuvre. High-quality item, deservedly popular, and a low rate deal, too.

£79
per month

Honda CL500

» £5699 » 471cc twin » 46bhp

» Deposit £815.79 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £3232.45

Neat, cheap, feel-good dynamic, and handsome to stop you aiming higher than your A2 ticket to ride. Latest in a long line of CL street scramblers (since 1966) and a fine example of the breed.

£66.92
per month

Triumph Speed 400

» £5195 » 398cc single » 40bhp

» Deposit £1000 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £2588.75

Junior Trumpet with all the attraction of the bigger models. Looks like it means business and it does, just touching the magic ton (when conditions oblige). A great way into the Triumph family.

£79.99
per month

Royal Enfield Classic 650

» £6499 » 648cc twin » 46bhp

» Deposit £1591.78 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £3278

When you have as much olde worlde back catalogue as Enfield it makes sense to milk it to the max. This machine mimics the ancient Madras Bullet and brings with it special charm – and an ace motor.

£84.99
per month

Royal Enfield Bear 650

» £6749 » 648cc twin » 46bhp

» Deposit £1565.85 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £3442

Tough-looking street scrambler take on the Interceptor with that handsome parallel-twin engine. The version with the green frame looks absolutely boss. Massively good value and tip-top to ride.

£66.50
per month

> ‘Grand to ride, also looks the part’

Triumph Scrambler 400 X

» £5795 » 398cc single » 40bhp

» Deposit £1200 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £3111.25

Similar deal to the Speed 400 except with knobblies and other minor concessions to the faux dirt world. Grand to ride. Also looks the part, which is all that really counts in street scrambler wonderland.

BMW K1600GTL

» £23,500 » 1649cc six » 158bhp

» Deposit £4700 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £11,997.27

Packing one of the most engaging engines in production and brimming with every conceivable touring touch, the GTL is an experience not to be missed. You could tow a caravan with this and still have almost sportsbike fun in the turns. Weapon.

> ‘Tow a caravan, still have fun in the turns’

£252.41 permonth

£365 permonth

Harley-Davidson Street Glide Ultra

» £28,495 » 1923cc twin » 107bhp

» Deposit £5541.18 » APR 9.8% » Final fee £15,396

Lineage can be traced to the 1965 Electra Glide when bike touring changed forever. The Ultra still has distance chops in spades, looks like nothing else, rides like nothing else. Got the (big) money? Do it.

£349 permonth

Honda GL1800 Gold Wing

» £25,799 » 1833cc six » 125bhp

» Deposit £4290.86 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £14,194.12

Arrived in 1975, morphed into a deserved distance legend. Flat six engine is unlike anything (save the BMW), and as far as bells and whistles go, Big Ben and marching bands have nothing on this.

£415 permonth

Indian Pursuit Limited 112

» £29,695 » 1834cc twin » 125bhp

» Deposit £5933 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £14,452

If you wish to sample a similar but delightfully different big tourer vibe to the H-D immersion then you will not regret switching to the Indian marque. Lacks for nothing, delivers in all departments.

£190.28 permonth

BMW R1250RT

» £17,580 » 1254cc twin » 134bhp

» Deposit £3500 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £10,081.16

The old R100RT boxer was the guv’nor back in 1978 and this latest successor has the same aces up its sleeve. There’s still something about a flat twin that makes a 400-mile day something to relish.

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Ducati Multistrada V2 S

» £16,566 » 890cc twin » 114bhp

» Deposit £4030.42 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £8903

£155 per month

The Multi' is now over 20 years old and the latest twin in the line is testament to how right the idea was more than two decades ago. Light, nicely sprung, plenty of poke, and the purest of the breed. Polished.

> ‘Light, nicely sprung, plenty of poke, and the purest of the breed’

£149 per month

Ducati Multistrada V4 S

» £22,671 » 1158cc four » 168bhp

» Deposit £5605.71 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £13,180

With 92 lb.ft of torque wafting you, your pillion and your luggage along, progress is as quick as you like. Semi-active ride, all the toys, and quite simply something of a masterpiece. And just 4.9% APR.

£129 per month

Honda XL750 Transalp

» £9899 » 755cc twin » 91bhp

» Deposit £1499.35 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £5847.98

Okay, the engine's revvy characteristics aren't perfectly suited to a trail bike, but since when has a Transalp been a pukka trail bike? Great in Ross White, this is a fine everyday adventure road tool.

£59
per month

KTM 390 Adventure

» £5199 » 373cc single » 43bhp

» Deposit £932.25 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £2656.25

The Austrians know how to do off-road, and this junior version of their Adventure family is dialled-in on the dirt. Currently £1400 off, plus keen APR. You spend more a month on frothy, sickly coffee.

£159
per month

KTM 1390 Super Adventure S

» £14,899 » 1350cc twin » 170bhp

» Deposit £2848 » APR 4.9% » Final fee £7798.75

2025 revamp with no panel left untouched. Bigger engine with auto gear option, better seat, lights, 8in TFT dash, radar cruise control, you name it. 170bhp, £15k bike for £37 week? Awesome.

£211.26
per month

BMW R1300GS Adventure

» £18,780 » 1300cc twin » 143bhp

» Deposit £3800 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £10,367.91

When a bike's adaptive height control lowers it as it comes to stop you sense rider-assist development is only just beginning. What's next? Fill up with petrol helper? Anyway, the big GS. Yes, amazing.

£129
per month

Yamaha Ténéré 700

» £10,404 » 689cc twin » 72bhp

» Deposit £2273 » APR 9.4% » Final fee £5376.25

Serious long-distance trail tool and a handy road device, too. Given a refresh this year (see p56), and better than ever. Yamaha's tarmac, dirt and desert know-how give a bike that excels in all departments.

Moto Guzzi V85 TT

» £12,150 » 853cc twin » 79bhp

» Deposit £2000 » APR 9.4% » Final fee £5503.75

Moto Guzzi has been knocking out Tutto Terreno (all terrain) machinery since the 1970s and the V85 is the sweetest of them all. Plenty of useful tech, day-long comfort, charming engine, fine looks. Lovely bike.

> 'Guzzi has been knocking out Tutto Terreno since the 1970s'

£190.14
per month

£179 per month

Honda Africa Twin

» £13,399 » 1084cc twin » 101bhp

» Deposit £2024.52 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £7739.20

Tweaked for this year with seven per cent more torque, enough to feel the extra. Makes a great bike greater. ES version gets Showa-EERA suspension (Electronically Equipped Ride Adjustment), plus heated grips and ACC socket.

£143.20 per month

Triumph Tiger 900 GT Pro

» £13,895 » 888cc triple » 107bhp

» Deposit £2800 » APR 7.9% » Final fee £8217.50

Outstanding engine, five-star comfort, and beautifully put together. Triumph nailed this during last year's revamp. Cheap to run, lively to ride, and such a very accomplished 'adventure touring' motorcycle.

£265 per month

Harley-Davidson Pan America 1250 ST

» £16,995 » 1252cc twin » 150bhp

» Deposit £3307.01 » APR 9.8% » Final fee £7206

Nicely styled, quick, lots of equipment, the best home for the Revolution Max 1250 engine. Way better than you think. This new ST – lower, crisper, 17in wheels – looks like a giant supermoto.

£199.24 per month

Triumph Tiger 1200 GT Pro

» £17,295 » 1160cc triple » 148bhp

» Deposit £3500 » APR £7.9% » Final fee £9357.50

Say, for instance, some well-informed folk tell you an 800 is all you need… just nod and go and buy something with a 1200 triple in it. Like the GT. Effortless power, sumptuous comfort, some machine.

£84.99 per month

Royal Enfield Himalayan 450

» £5750 » 452cc single » 39bhp

» Deposit £1323.23 » APR 9.9% » Final fee £2438

One of those rare bikes where the whole is way better than the spec. Last year's ground-up refresh completely reset the Himmy – this is all anyone needs for a relaxed trip to anywhere on the planet.

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Super Meteor 650 from £94.99 a month on PCP, 9.9% APR representative*

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Deposit %	22.59%
Amount of Credit	£5,996.79
Monthly Payment	£94.99
Optional Final Payment (incl. £10 fee)	£3,325
Total Amount Payable by Customer	£9,539.74
Duration of Contract	48
Rate of Interest (Fixed)	9.85%
APR	**9.9% APR Representative**

Super METEOR 650

*Offer available on ROYAL ENFIELD SUPER METEOR 650 CELESTIAL RED WITH PANNIERS ordered between 01/04/2025 and 30/06/2025. 48 month term. Minimum £1,750.21 customer deposit required. The model variant shown is for illustrative purposes only. Accessories may also be featured that are not standard fit. Minimum £3,325 optional final payment. With Royal Enfield Finance PCP, you may return the vehicle instead of making the final payment. It must be in good condition and, if you exceed the agreed annual mileage, you will be charged 10p per mile for exceeding 4,000 miles p.a. in this example. Subject to status. Guarantees may be required. T&Cs apply. Offer may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Participating retailers only. Royal Enfield Finance, PO Box 4465, Slough, SL1 0RW. Your retailer will usually receive a fixed percentage commission for introducing customers to Royal Enfield Finance.

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Notice the lack of 8ft wire fences or acres of space between the crowd and riders. Inside, out the weather, few events get you as close to the action. And action there definitely is

[Inside]

SuperEnduro rocks Newcastle

Part motocross, part trials, entirely crazy. We go to Newcastle for the SuperEnduro World Championship with the new **Triumph factory off-road team**

Interviews and photography **Chippy Wood**

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Top-class rider

Not many bigger names in SuperEnduro than British star Jonny Walker. Triumph's factory rider started out doing trials before moving to motocross. 'My friends had tracks, so I rode at them, and then just kind of fell into enduro,' says the 34-year-old. 'I did a year on my own when I was maybe 18 or 19, then got picked up by a British team supported by KTM. The manager was a guy called Julian Stevens, who was David Knight's old mechanic. He was like, "we need to go and do an extreme race", which at the time was the Erzbergrodeo. I was third on my first time.' Walker has since won Erzberg, plus the Hell's Gate, Tough One and Red Bull Romaniacs events. Quite handy, then.

The man in white

You may be used to seeing Walker in red or orange, not these colours. He started with KTM (while still doing a proper job) and rode for the Austrian team for almost ten years before spending three with Beta. The Triumph move came after Jonny messaged head of global racing Ian Kimber, who's been at Triumph for 21 years, via Instagram. 'I was at the point where I was probably going to pack up,' said Walker. 'I've done it for 15 years… I don't want to ruin myself for the rest of my life. But I knew Triumph were coming. I watched Supercross [in the US], saw the effort they put in, and wanted to be part of a British brand coming in. So, I messaged him, even if it was just some testing. It gave me a new motivation.'

Organic plan…

How do you ready yourself for this chaos? By doing something equally chaotic. Triumph raced the TF250-X in Supercross and EnduroCross in the US in 2024, with promising results. When they signed Walker for SuperEnduro, he went out to get a taste for himself. 'I went out for a couple of weeks and rode a bike – without Ian probably knowing. I said, let's just go because I want to train for this. And then we came here [to Newcastle], did a one-off race [2024 Indoor Enduro of Champions] and won.' The following weekend was the first round of EnduroCross in the States, so Ian and Jonny talked about doing a couple of rounds as a wild card… which quickly spiralled. 'We had the conversation back at base,' says Ian, 'and said if he's going well and wants to carry on, are we going to support the rest of it? Yeah. Of course.' Walker won the final round and finished fourth overall – then it was straight into SuperEnduro.

The right people

Triumph's dirt-bike outfit is run by Paul Edmondson, a four-time World Enduro champion and stalwart of the International Six Days Enduro (what used to be the International Six Days Trial, or ISDT). He's also the chap with the responsibility of being at the controls of the second factory Triumph TF250-E in the Prestige category (and Edmondson was Daniel Craig's stunt double for the glorious bike action in the James Bond film *No Time to Die*, too). 'The team's great,' reckons Walker. 'Paul's the team manager, but he's also been doing the testing from day one. My mechanic Jean Andoche (left) has worked for a lot of good teams over the years, and worked for Paul last year. He's from Réunion Island – that's near Madagascar. Miles away. But he's a very good mechanic. He was only supposed to do one race with me, but we pushed Ian… Triumph turn stuff round so fast.'

Just like yours

'We run the bike as stock as possible to prove that what you buy in the dealership can run at the best level,' says Kimber. 'Keeping the engine close to stock shows what we're building is super-competitive.' Triumph raced in AMA Supercross for a year so knew the 250cc four-stroke single and aluminium frame were good. But forks and shock were more of an unknown due to the demands of SuperEnduro. 'We started from zero on the suspension setting,' adds Kimber, 'but managed to get the baseline.'

Diverse ExtremeTeam
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RAPTOR TITANIUM

Going big

Fancy seeing a Tiger 900 being flung over a course like this? Who wouldn't? And it's perhaps not as unlikely as it seems. 'Triumph do road bikes,' says Walker, 'and I kind of want to do videos with Red Bull and people like that on road bikes. I want to try to go a bit outside of the sport, bring something to the street. Romaniacs has a class for adventure bikes, which I would like to do. It's something different. And with Triumph having a load of different bikes, it gives the opportunity.'

More to come

Triumph have been racing in AMA Supercross, EnduroCross and the FIM Motocross world championship with the TF250-X since 2024, as well as FIM SuperEnduro with the TF250-E enduro bike. These have been joined in their off-road line-up by new 450cc versions. But though the 250 arrived first, the bikes hold equal billing at Triumph. 'They're about 50/50,' says Kimber. 'But the 250 went into production first so was the natural bike to go and race with. We could have gone into MX GP and raced as a prototype and not worried about it, but it was important for us to prove the bike we were going to sell. So, we started with the 250. It also means we can grow our rider programme – riders can go from 250s to 450s. We've signed Mikkel Haarup again [Triumph's MX racer] on a development year for the 450, then we'll take him into 450s when it's ready to go. It's important to have talent that stays with you.'

SUPER ENDURO
FIM WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
FINISH
2025

Steep learning curve

'When racers practise, they think they're running at race pace,' notes Ian. 'Then when they get into a race environment, against everyone else, the pace goes on – and so the bike will react differently. Every track is different – and because we're new to it, we didn't have a baseline. Jonny's racing in all the same arenas as he's done over the past few years, so he'll know the dirt, but he knows it from a two-stroke. Paul's not run guys in SuperEnduro previously – he's run four-strokes in Enduro GP, but the set-ups are completely different. And a lot of Jonny's chassis experience is from a steel-framed bike, whereas we've got aluminium. Every round, you're building up your data pile. Obviously when it comes around this year, he's got no excuses…'

SUPER ENDURO
FIM WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
2
1
3

Straight on the pace

Billy Bolt (top step) is the fella to beat. The tache-shod Husqvarna rider from Tyneside nailed his fifth consecutive SuperEnduro world title in Newcastle, having topped the podium in the Prestige class at all seven rounds of the 2024/25 championship. Triumph were immediately at the sharp end, though. In a field full of other big dirt-bike brands including Beta, Sherco and GasGas, Walker stuck the Triumph TF250-E on the podium in six races, including a hard-fought second in Newcastle – and claimed second overall in the series, first time out. 'I think what we've done and what Triumph have done with building a bike from scratch is pretty amazing,' says Walker. 'We're battling with other brands that have been doing this for the past 15 years.'

BLACK
ENERGY
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TRIUMPH

Go there…

FIM SuperEnduro will rock Newcastle again on 28 February 2026 for the GP of United Kingdom, the penultimate round of the 2025/26 season. Tickets will be available soon via superenduro.org/schedule/gp-united-kingdom

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FILTHY FUEL *and* CRAZY GOATS

After discovering her partner was having an affair, **Noraly Schoenmaker** quit her job as a geologist and set off to ride the globe. We join the creator of the Itchy Boots YouTube channel and Basanti – her trusty Royal Enfield Himalayan – on the edge of Tajikistan…

Words and photography **Noraly Schoenmaker**

Life was extraordinarily tough out here, and most people barely lived to see 60. The high altitude, the infertile land, the scarcity of water and the extreme cold ensured that only the most determined of souls could survive here. Just outside town were three small buildings that I'd marked on my phone as the most likely place to find gas. Just before I came to a stop, a woman stepped outside.

'Hello,' I said. She greeted me back. 'Gas?'

'How much do you need?' she asked. In reality, I didn't understand what she said, but that seemed like the most relevant question to me. So, by way of reply I held up both my hands, spreading my fingers.

'10 litres, yes,' she said, and immediately headed towards the smaller building. She opened the grey metal doors and I tried to peek inside from Basanti's seat. It was pitch black in there, but I could make out the contours of a bunch of large plastic containers. As it turned out, fire safety wasn't something to concern oneself with here. She came out with a large cylindrical funnel and one of those big gallon jugs of water, only now filled with gas. The liquid inside had a brownish-orange glow, but I didn't know if that was because of the filthy plastic container or additives to the fuel. Perhaps it was supposed to look like that? I asked her to only fill my two backup jerrycans, so I wouldn't have this dubious substance in the main tank right away. Part of me still hoped I'd make it to Sary-Tash in Kyrgyzstan with what was left in there now, and then I might not have to use this gas at all.

I paid her and rode a lap through Murghab, looking for a restaurant. The majority of Murghab's population were in fact ethnic Kyrgyz, a nomadic people. When Tajikistan became a part of the Soviet Republic in 1929, remote villages like these weren't part of the equation. That's how Murghab ended up included in the Republic of Tajikistan, even though it was mostly ethnic Kyrgyz that lived here. I turned into a small side street and unintentionally ended up right on the bazaar, Murghab's shopping street. The stores were old shipping containers that had been stacked next to one another in an almost-straight line. Some containers were closed, but others had opened their doors wide.

I parked Basanti next to one of the containers and strolled through the street for a bit. I needed toothpaste and soap. The shopkeepers gave me hopeful looks, but almost every shipping container was jam-packed to the ceiling with plastic junk from China. 'Made in China' were the only words I could read.

The Kulma Pass, deep in the Pamir Mountains, connected Murghab with China and was only 50 miles away from Murghab. Not long after the Soviet Union collapsed and Tajikistan gained its independence, the border with China reopened and a wave of Chinese goods started pouring in. This had to be where all of the knock-off Gucci sweaters were coming from.

I managed to find a tube of toothpaste and bought a pair of thin mitts to wear as an extra layer underneath my motorcycle gloves, but soap curiously proved to be an impossible mission. Although I was sure soap was somewhere to be found, I couldn't be bothered with the long search. Instead, I walked back to my bike and resumed my hunt for a restaurant.

After finishing up a plate of laghman for the umpteenth time on this trip and lingering to stay in the cosy heat of the restaurant a little longer, I got ready to leave Murghab. Even though there was a hotel down here, and earlier in the day I had considered staying around for a night, I wanted nothing more than to leave. My desire to escape the bleakness of Murghab, suddenly longing for sunshine, won out. In my eagerness to leave, I opened Basanti's throttle just a little more than I usually did.

I was almost out of town, going at about 30mph, when I suddenly spotted three goats from the corner of my eye. In a blind panic they came storming towards me at full speed, and before I knew it, they ran across the road right in front of me. I had nowhere to go, and although I squeezed my front brake as hard as I could, I couldn't avoid slamming into goat number

FREE SPIRIT M/C
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Noraly's travels are taking her around the globe: the Enfield is rescued in Iran after burning out the clutch (above); outside ancient ruins in Myanmar (above right); and early morning in Turkey with a balloon or two

'I wanted nothing more than to leave. My desire to escape the bleakness of Murghab, suddenly longing for sunshine, won out'

two with my front wheel. I hit it right on the head. I'm going to crash, I thought. The aftermath of the collision prematurely flashed through my mind – I would come down and roll three times, wrecking Basanti and ending my adventure.

But to my astonishment, that wasn't at all what happened. The goat's head got hit so hard that it swung aside, and for my part, I just came to a stop without crashing. I jerked my head back and saw the goat lying motionless on the road. I looked ahead again, and only then noticed the soldier who was standing by the side of the road and had seen everything. I looked at him, wide-eyed and bewildered, and he immediately started gesturing frantically with his arms.

'Go, go, go,' he shouted, a worried look in his eyes. 'Okay, okay, okay,' I replied, and I got the hell out of there. I was convinced that I'd have to pay the goat's owner if the goat was dead, and didn't get why the soldier had gone into such a panic. Either way, I was too afraid to turn around and ask him. What if an angry mob of villagers came after me? For the next hour I pondered a reason why the soldier had sent me away so quickly.

It wasn't until I came closer to the Ak-Baital Pass that I stopped thinking about the goat. I'd become totally consumed instead by my own hands. The motorcycle gloves I'd been gifted in Dubai were summer gloves – and came with dozens of small holes for ventilation. Wonderful for Dubai's desert climate, but entirely unsuitable for winter climates on the Pamir Mountains. The icy wind cut through my skin like a thousand tiny razor blades. My hands grew so cold that at first they started aching, and then went totally numb.

I tucked away my left hand as far as possible between my seat and my thigh. As long as I didn't have to change gears, I wouldn't need it anyway.

My right hand had to stay gripped on the throttle to keep the motorcycle upright.

The cold has also gnawed its way through my black motorcycle jacket; the warmest piece of clothing I owned. I'd never ridden at temperatures like these before and didn't have the right gear for it. Why didn't I bring any thermal underwear with me? Or something like winter gloves? I was out of my mind. Bathing in the heat of Dubai, I couldn't have imagined it to be this cold here. By the time I realised that spring was still far from arriving, I was already too far along the Pamir to find something like a motorcycle store and buy proper gear.

Luckily, I was no longer suffering from headaches or other symptoms of altitude sickness, but breathing remained a challenge. At this altitude, the atmospheric pressure and oxygen concentration were 60 per cent lower than at sea level, and even though my motorcycle was doing most of the work, I still caught myself panting. I climbed to the top of the pass, at 15,272ft, and was relieved to find a snow-free road. For days I'd been dreading this pass and expecting tons of snow. The pleasant surprise of it being easier than expected here gave me a boost in courage.

I had just passed the biggest obstacle. According to my maths, I only had an hour's ride left to Karakul. But I had barely left the pass when the road suddenly turned into an unpaved mess. The corrugations in the sandy gravel were so deep and tall that I almost bounced off Basanti. I slowed down and tried to ride over them as carefully as I could. When that didn't work, I tried it again at a higher speed, but that was even worse. I pounded and stomped, hobbled and sloshed over the road, like an egg dancing up and down in a pot of boiling water. Part of me

Local Thai residents at the roadside (below left); Basanti gets the first thorough service (below); Russian police do a paperwork check and beach riding in Thailand (below right); and the majesty of the snowy mountains in Kyrgyzstan (right)

> **'I climbed to the top of the pass, at 15,272ft, and was relieved to find a snow-free road'**

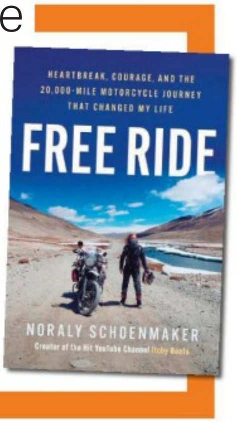
half-expected the rear suspension of my bike to burst apart in an explosion of oil.

My motorcycle held up, but every hit reverberated into my spine, and I couldn't cope with the bumps sitting down. I tried to stand on the footpegs to relieve the strain on my back, but the shocks of the washboard road made my boots slip, slamming me back down onto the seat over and over again. I sat back down and slowed down. Dazed, I looked at the road. Whose bright idea had it been to build this torturous pass?

'I want to go home. I want to go home,' I kept repeating out loud…

Free Ride

» Noraly continues to travel and has covered more than 100,000 miles through 80 countries, covering her adventures on her YouTube channel Itchy Boots. This story is an excerpt from the new book of her travels, *Free Ride*, which is published in June. **canelo.co**



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BIKES

BMW S1000R Sport: Living with [106]
Guzzi V7 Sport: New bikes [109]
Ducati Streetfighter: Why I love [109]
Yamaha TDR250: Our bikes [110]
KTM 690 Enduro R: Our bikes [111]
Morini Camel: Ahead of its time [122]

RIDING

Joy on a Scrambler: Pub ammo [112]
Build a chopper: Pub ammo [115]
Jacket 'n' jeans: Head to toe [116]
American auctions: Know it all [117]
Fixing punctures: Tyres [117]
Chippy adventure: Out & about [118]

Thing of the month

Oxford fold-away bar-end mirrors £39.99

According to my dad, the way he and his mates used to make their bikes look meaner/faster/cooler was by taking the mirrors off. Obviously, he won't let me do that on my Lexmoto, so I've fitted these instead. Made from anodised aluminium, they transform the look of the bike – the stock mirrors were vast and ugly – and actually give a better view of what's behind. And because they fold I can still get past the car on the drive and through the garden gate.

Lyle Armitage

oxfordproducts.com

EXPERTS IN THIS ISSUE

Mike Armitage
Mr Editor

Delivers findings on day-to-day life with BMW's new S1000R.

Michael Neeves
Mr Tester

Bunks off day job on *MCN* to tell us what new Guzzi V7 is like.

Bruce Dunn
Mr Workshop

Pulls our TDR250 apart and wonders why it's full of water.

Roland Brown
Mr Trail Newbie

Attaches gubbins to his KTM ready for some byway antics.

David Silver
Mr Honda

Spills the beans on flogging stuff in that there America.

Paul Lang
Mr Jet Wash

Learns that adventure bikes are good things. Also eats some chips.

[Living with]

BMW S
Sport

BMW MOTORRAD
n25

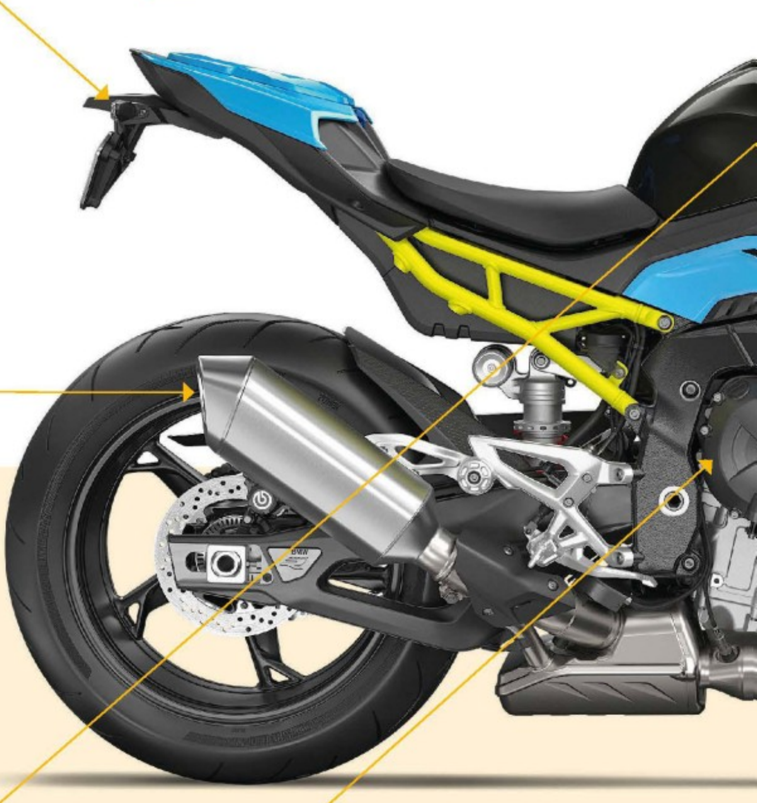
CAN YOU SEE ME?

No old-fashioned tail light here. Instead, like many BMWs, the red bits are included in the winkers. In bright conditions I worry that slowing and turning signals are not as obvious as they could be (especially having followed other bikes). They look significantly slicker than an old K100's breeze blocks, mind.

AKRAPOVIC
BMW MOTORRAD

EASY TO GET CARRIED AWAY

The S1000R Sport is £15,920 in black with electronic suspension, keyless ride, tyre monitoring, heated grips, quickshifter, cruise control and more. Add £420 for these colours, £1080 for the billet pack (levers, controls, pegs), £935 for the silencer, £155 for the screen, £1440 for forged wheels… and you're at £20k.



IT'S THE SMALL THINGS

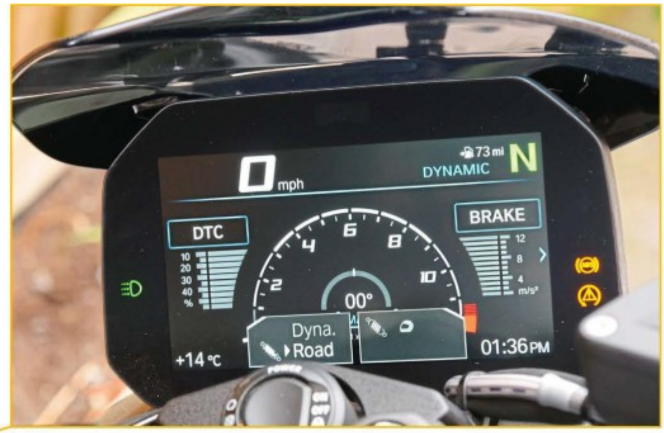
The Sport version is keyless (£200 option on the base bike), meaning you can saunter out the house fully togged up like Street Hawk/The Stig/Batman, just prod the button and ride off. And then faff about trying to find the key at the petrol station. Small thing, yes – but surely keyless should mean just that.

REFINED YET AGGRESSIVE

BMW's inline-four 999cc engine is tractable and precisely fuelled. It's also a snappy-geared 168bhp nutter that explodes out of corners and wheelies everywhere with the electronics turned off. From cold, the optional Sport end can wakes neighbours and the clutch is grabbier than a spoilt toddler in a toy shop.

1000R

We've done the first 750 miles with our perky new Beemer. Here's what **Mike Armitage** has found so far



STUFFED FULL, YET USABLE

You can only scroll one way through trip info, which is annoying if you flick past what you want. Otherwise the display is exemplary, with switchgear allowing easy set-up tweaks (crisp Dynamic mode but with Road suspension, please). The Sport display option offers lots of distracting extra info: lean angle, traction intervention, etc.

DESIGNED TO MAKE YOU GO SLOWER

At motorway speed the accessory bar-end mirrors (£190) are a fizzy blur. They're not much better on proper riding roads, so looking back over your shoulder is essential to see if the white car has blue lights. With the S1000R having so much firepower, they're perhaps designed like this to make you paranoid and ride slower.

BUILT FOR THE ROAD

Yes, it's sporty, hellish fast and super sharp. But this doesn't mean rock hard and skittish. Check out how much travel the S1000R's semi-active Marzocchi forks use in semi-spirited road riding. You can make it stiffer or plusher at the touch of a button, and the sense of roadholding is superb.

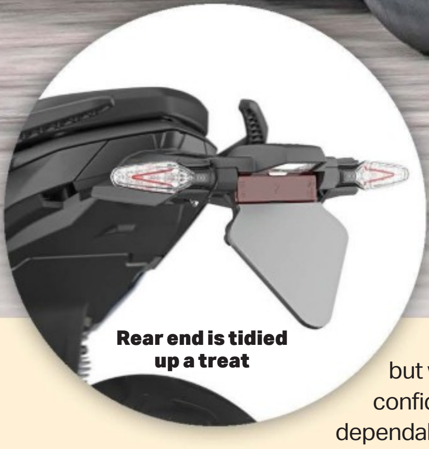
PRACTICAL PERFORMER

The Sport model comes with heated grips with three settings: warm, toasty, and ruddy-hell-fire. If you're going for the base bike, tick the £260 option box – they're the sort of thing that makes every ride better. The optional screen is decent too: it still feels like a naked, but 80mph motorway cruising is bearable.

[Knowledge]

New bikes

You gotta love bright-coloured wheels



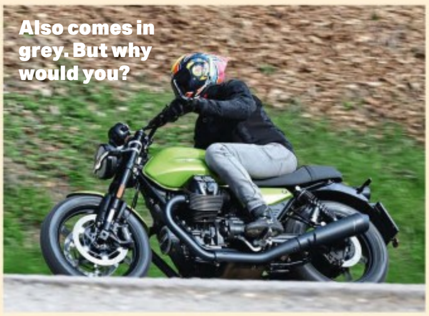
Rear end is tidied up a treat

BMW F900XR

All-rounder gets more spec, more tech, and woo-hoo colours

What's new? The forks are now fully adjustable, bringing more sophistication and potential to mess up the handling. Lighter wheels and battery, the headlight surround is fettled to improve airflow, and heated grips, a USB-C port, adaptive LED headlight and lean-aware rider aids are standard. Jazztastic colours, too.

***Bike's* opinion** We were already fans of the twin-cylinder F900XR. It might not be as complete as a Yamaha Tracer 9 GT, but we rate the Beemer's gutsy midrange, confidence-inspiring front end and its all-weather dependability. The problem was that most of the bits that gave the finishing sheen were options. But cranking up the equipment level for this year has better aligned the XR with rivals and means that at £10,890 it's greater value than ever. We'd still splash out an extra £830 for the Dynamic package for its plush electronic suspension (plus two-way quickshifter and extra mode). Oh, and £360 for these groovy 'Sport' colours. We'll have a big-mile test of the new XR against the Tracer and Triumph Tiger Sport 800 next issue.



Also comes in grey. But why would you?

Guzzi V7 Sport

New range-topping retro with a subtle smattering of bling

What's new? New cams, throttle bodies and airbox give the 853cc V-twin more shunt. Ride-by-wire and a six-axis whatsit allow three modes and cornering traction and ABS (from a previous Aprilia RSV4). Chunky USD forks, lighter wheels, LCD display and new switchgear as well. ***Bike's* opinion** This is neat. Ride quality, agility and handling are all improved over the earlier V7 and the up-to-date dash and electronics give modern usability and reassurance. Yet the £9700 Sport retains that touchy-feely Guzziness; it still engages and involves the rider, still makes your tummy feel nice. Top thing.

Bigger wings. What every commute needs

BMW S1000RR

Britain's favourite superbike gets even more 'grrr' for 2025

What's new? Altered aerodynamic sticky-out bits, tweaked motor to meet Euro5+ regs, 'riding modes pro' and quick-action throttle (from the M1000RR), plus air ducts for the front brake. Racy. ***Bike's* opinion** The RR outsells its rivals threefold by mixing brain-curdling performance with usability. But every iteration gets more serious and the latest one takes it further, with a sharper feel from the twistgrip and more input needed to muscle it around. Feels firm on the road too, but on track it's exceptional. If that floats your boat, wade in. The base bike costs £17,990, while the Sport is £19,330.

Makes you look good – both on track and for the cameras

[Why I love my...]

2020 Ducati Streetfighter

Clive Shepherd on why buying a supernaked was a wise choice

I ordered my Streetfighter in 2019 before pictures of it were released – I was so convinced about a 205bhp Panigale V4 engine in a Streetfighter chassis that I decided, for once, I'd get the latest thing. Because of Covid lockdowns I eventually got it in June 2020 and I absolutely love it.

It's done 8000 miles and around 6000 of those have been on track, where it's just... wow. It's incredibly flattering. The electronics are so sophisticated and the brakes are amazing (though I've never felt the ABS come on, no matter how hard I brake going into corners).

It's not the best road bike I've ever ridden. I'm an experienced motorcyclist (Clive's been riding for 50 years and is a Rapid Training road and track coach – Ed) and not averse to a bit of performance, but goodness it's fast. Full power mode on the road is an experience. And the suspension is brutal – I get the fuel light at 80 miles and I'm usually happy to see it. It's very capable, but it exhausts me. And I have to rein myself in a lot, especially during that first month of the season. For my 6am Sunday blast to the Cotswolds it's epic, but it's no tourer.

I've kept it completely standard apart from a radiator guard, heated grips and single seat conversion. I certainly wouldn't want to do anything that gave me more power. The Pirelli Diablo Rosso Corsas it came on were great but I'm currently trying some Michelin Power 5s, which are alright. It'll rip up a rear tyre in a day on track if you let it. It's been 100 per cent reliable and just had basic servicing.

Overall, it's a keeper. I don't want – or need – a newer or more powerful one. I'm lucky enough to have a few other bikes in the garage for everyday duties, so the Streetfighter is my special-occasion bike.

> 'On track it's just... wow'

Buying tips

» What to look Quality is superb and reliability is good, although some owners report electronic issues – so check/test all the various whatnots. Odd talk of coolant leaks and water pump failure, too. The 15k service is a big 'un (£700+) so make sure it's not being sold to avoid the cost.

» What to pay from £12,000

» Insurance mcncompare.com

MCN COMPARE

[**Our Bikes**]

Fuelling around

Last month his son's moped enjoyed petrol shenanigans, now it's editor Armitage's **TDR250** that's playing silly buggers. Spanner expert **Bruce Dunn** dives in

Water in the bottom. What's known as suboptimal

Right tool means unchewed fasteners

> 'Pilot jets are blocked and main jet nozzles are clogged with grime'

You'll have seen E5 and E10 on petrol pumps. This indicates the amount of ethanol in the fuel – 10 per cent for E10. Ethanol is hygroscopic, which means it likes absorbing water. So, when Mike's 1990 Yamaha TDR250 starts bogging and dying when warm, he suspects water in the fuel tank – just as with his son Lyle's Lexmoto 50 (last issue). Hence, it's on my bench.

After checking the spark plugs and finding a good spark with the engine both hot and cold, it's into the fuel system. When bikes are used infrequently the petrol has what petrochemical experts refer to as 'phase separation' – the water in the tank unmixes from the petrol and is drawn into the engine as it sits in the bottom of the tank where the fuel feed usually is. And engines don't run well on water.

The existing fuel is ideally drained used a siphon, but you can do it the old-fashioned way like we did in the '80s with a piece of garden hose (and be prepared for a wave of nostalgia when you get a mouthful of petrol). I drain it into a transparent jug, which allows me to spot any water or contaminants, before pouring it into a jerry can. And yes: the last remnants contain a small amount of water contamination.

The tank is flushed with fresh petrol with the fuel tap removed, and I give the tap a thorough clean with carb cleaner while it's off. The plastic gauze filter is often overlooked and can trap water, so it gets a good blast with compressed air, followed by a heat gun on a low setting to evaporate any remaining moisture.

To get at the carbs on the TDR it's easier to remove the front exhaust pipes. Various rubber hoses need to be disconnected for access and can often be hardened on an older bike like this, so I use the heat gun to warm them and make the job easier. I recommend doing the same for the carb rubbers, both for removal and installation.

Once the carbs are off, the exterior is cleaned (use brake or carb cleaner) and a nylon brush removes lingering dirt. This makes dismantling them less messy. Using the correct cross-head screwdriver is important when disassembling carbs: use a JIS (Japanese Industrial Standard) tip or – as I did here – a Milwaukee PH2 equivalent, which fits perfectly and reduces the risk of damaging screw heads.

Removing the float bowls to inspect for contamination from dirt or water, I find traces of both. Jets are carefully removed,

PICS: BRUCE DUNN

Hmm. That flaky exhaust paint needs sorting

treated to carb cleaner and dried with a low-pressure air line. Holding them up to a light shows if passageways are clear; both pilot jets are blocked, and some of the smaller holes in the main jet nozzles are clogged with grime.

After reassembling the Yamaha (and fitting new plugs – access isn't easy on the TDR, so for £7.98 it's worth doing while it's apart), it's time for a quick road test. I stop and start it several times, and it behaves perfectly. But what really amazes me is how much joy the TDR brings. This 35-year-old is definitely the best bike I've ridden in a long time – the smoothness of the engine and the sheer joy of the two-stroke power delivery are both brilliant.

Fortunately, I bought myself a basket case TDR last year. It will now be getting assembled sooner rather than later… ***BD***

[Our Bikes]

'Light digging and a gentle spill'

Undeterred by his first off-road jaunt, **Roland Brown** sets about beefing up his KTM 690 Enduro

Having endured a torrid introduction to Hertfordshire's muddy lanes aboard (and frequently sprawled alongside) my standard-tyred 690 Enduro R, I'd realised that both the KTM and my ability to look after it urgently required upgrading.

Knobblier tyres were essential, as was toughening up the bike to cope with the inevitable spills. So, I've bought and bolted on shorter levers and solid lever protectors, 'unbreakable' mirrors, stronger foot levers, engine case guards and crash bars.

A sturdy aluminium bash plate, from Czech specialists Rade Garage, has a storage area for tyre levers and spare tube. The firm also makes a plastic box that replaces the under-seat airbox and is ideal for tools and other bits: tyre gauge, pump, head torch, disc lock, first-aid kit, ultra-light camping trowel (27 grams!), and mini-chainsaw for fallen branches. And a tow rope, after I'd viewed off-road guru Chris Birch extricating a KTM from a bog by tying one end to a tree and using the spinning rear wheel as a winch.

Disappointingly, when I buried the 690 in a deep rut (see last month) there was no tree within range, so I had to summon the Family Rescue Service (aka son Freddie) for the first time.

I haven't practised the winching technique yet, but have changed several tyres – thankfully at leisure in the garden, rather than somewhere remote after a puncture. I'm still no expert mechanic, but after much fiddling I'm more confident than I was.

Best trip so far has been a four-day solo trek along the Great West Trail to Devon, which included some gnarly sections that confirmed the KTM is now tough as well as capable. I returned to rutted 'Snot Lane' too – scene of our disastrous debut – and made it through with just some light digging, only one gentle spill, and no damage.

Latest addition is a Rade Garage screen which, along with hot grips and an electrical socket, enhances riding hugely. It's taken a while (and a few quid), but the 690 is now a brilliant all-terrain, all-weather motorcycle. ***RB***

Unbreakable mirrors? Only time will tell

PIC: ROLAND BROWN

Listings

This isn't a limp brochure-style round-up of all the bikes you can buy. No, your guide is far more useful as it **only contains bikes that we have tested**, with comparable on-the-road prices plus data, expert opinion and must-know detail gathered by fussy full-time testers. We do hundreds of thousands of miles, dyno, datalog, weigh and answer the big questions. Don't buy a new bike without reading this first.

BIKE	PRICE	ENGINE	TOP SPEED	POWER	MPG	BIKE VERDICT	RATING	TESTED
APRILIA uk.aprilia.com, 00800 15565500 *Bike's* choice: Tuono Factory defines the supernaked class… but we'd buy an RS660								
RSV4 Factory	£23,150	1099cc V4	186mph*	214bhp**	45mpg	Ace engine, great suspension and electronics, exemplary steering. Also tiny, and depreciates.	9/10	Jul '21
Tuono V4 Factory	£18,250	1077cc V4	165mph	159bhp	35mpg	Superb motor, crisp chassis, exotic-yet-friendly. Cool. Non-Factory model is every-day usable.	10/10	Jul '24
Tuareg 660	£10,750	659cc twin	120mph*	79bhp**	59mpg**	Ténéré rival is less rounded but has more tech and better suspension. Rugged, fun, but a bit raw.	8/10	Oct '22
RS660	£10,450	659cc twin	139mph	91bhp	45mpg	Sportsbike handling, punch and tech; sports-tourer comfort and usability. Impressive thing.	10/10	Dec '24
Tuono 660	£9,850	659cc twin	135mph*	90bhp*	50mpg	Comfier and more agile than RS660, more fun than a Street Triple. Fancier Factory version £10k.	9/10	Jun '21
BENELLI benelli.com, 0844 4128450 *Bike's* choice: not ridden it yet, but the Leoncino 800 Trail looks tidy…								
752 S	£6,171	754cc twin	95mph*	75bhp **	55mpg	Designed in Italy, built in China. Looks a bit disjointed but rides well – not MT-07 league, but good.	7/10	Jul '20
TRK 502	£4,938	500cc twin	95mph*	46bhp**	72mpg**	Lacks a little balance and refinement, but good value distance tool. Italy's best-selling big bike.	6/10	Mar '18
BIMOTA bimotauk.co.uk, 01603 920240 *Bike's* choice: radical, extreme, whacky, beautiful… who wouldn't want a Tesi?								
Tesi H2	£59,000	998cc V4	190mph*	237bhp**	28mpg	Epic supercharged motor in delicious hub-steered chassis. Exquisite, wild, thirsty, expensive.	8/10	Sep '21
BMW bmw-motorrad.co.uk, 0800 777155 *Bike's* choice: yeah, it's predictable… but brilliance of the GS can't be ignored								
R18 Classic	£19,540	1802cc flat twin	115mph*	91bhp**	51mpg	Ace boxer cruiser spoilt a tad by its slightly Harley-ish screen and bags, but still a tidy device.	8/10	May '21
R18	£17,480	1802cc flat twin	113mph	87bhp	50mpg	Top mix of modernity, quality and tradition. Roctane model (£22k) has less bling, more handling.	9/10	Jul '21
K1600GT	£21,100	1649cc inline 6	154mph**	158bhp**	48mpg**	Magical motor, amazing agility, self-levelling suspension, all the toys… It's a sporty-super-tourer.	9/10	Jul '22
R1300GS TE	£18,465	1300cc flat twin	135mph**	138bhp	49mpg	Less weight, more oomph, fancy toys – it's the best big GS yet. But the Ducati Multi' V4 is slicker…	9/10	Jul '24
R1250RT	£17,350	1254cc flat twin	142mph	117bhp	50mpg	Go-to tourer isn't to all tastes but you can't argue that the variable-valve radar-shod twin is top.	9/10	Dec '21
R1250RS SE	£15,410	1254cc flat twin	139mph	127bhp	50mpg	Fast, comfy, accomplished, lots of tech – sports-tourers aren't dead. Not perfect, but it's close.	9/10	May '20
R1250R	£12,330	1254cc flat twin	150mph*	134bhp**	60mpg**	Ace variable-valve motor in friendly, comfy, capable chassis. Better pure road bike than a GS?	9/10	Aug '19
R12 nineT	£14,420	1170cc flat twin	140mph*	108bhp**	55mpg**	High-quality retro with thumping twin, solid handling, top details, and more tech than ever. Ace.	9/10	May '24
M1000RR	£36,040	999cc inline 4	195mph*	209bhp*	36mpg*	Wild homologation exotica with stupid power and wings – yet you can ride it to work. Mind-blowing.	9/10	Dec '23
M1000XR	£22,580	999cc inline 4	173mph	190bhp	42mpg	Adventure meets WSB. Epic... but a bit vibey and no luggage options. Not sure why you'd want it.	7/10	Oct '24
S1000RR Sport	£18,610	999cc inline 4	190mph*	207bhp**	44mpg**	Amazing mix of insane performance and usability, but latest one not quite as friendly as it used to be.	9/10	Feb '25
S1000XR TE	£18,340	999cc inline 4	155mph	161bhp	43mpg	High-rise sportsbike. Fast, agile, well equipped. Also got an odd seat. Very good, but not perfect.	8/10	May '25
S1000R Sport	£15,315	999cc inline 4	167mph	163bhp	48mpg	Not shouty, but epic: agility, ride, engine and spec are superb. M1000R (£19,480) not worth extra.	10/10	Aug '22
F900XR	£10,890	895cc twin	130mph*	100bhp	50mpg	Easy-to-use Tracer rival with eager twin, fit chassis, and better-than-ever spec for solid value.	8/10	Jul '25
F900GS	£11,995	895cc twin	130mph*	103bhp**	60mpg**	Better on road and trail than previous 850. Not full of character, but the best GS for greenlaning.	8/10	May '24
F750GS	£8,995	853cc twin	110mph*	76bhp	69mpg**	Slim front tyre and 19in wheel make this detuned 850 a better road bike. But lacks some 'wow'.	7/10	May '18
G310GS	£5,890	313cc single	88mph**	34bhp**	84mpg**	Decent quality, easy to ride, but missing a defining GS character. Not peanuts, but good.	7/10	Mar '18
BSA bsacompany.co.uk *Bike's* choice: there's only one model so far, good job it's quite compelling…								
Gold Star	£5,171	652cc single	105mph*	43bhp	58mpg	A2-legal retro with '50s style, decent quality and iconic badge. For laid-back Sunday pootles.	8/10	Jul '25
CCM ccm-motorcycles.com, 01204 544930 *Bike's* choice: of the various Spitfire variants the flat-tracker models look coolest								
Spitfire Bobber	£12,767	600cc single	100mph*	55bhp**	56mpg	Curious mix of laid-back bobber styling with stiff chassis and revvy power. Not mega, but good.	8/10	Jan '20
Street Moto	£9995	600cc single	100mph*	55bhp**	55mpg*	Punchy, simple, light back-lane tool. Fun, not practical. R (11,495) has light wheels, posh shock.	8/10	Dec '24
CFMOTO cfmoto.co.uk *Bike's* choice: Chinese bikes come of age – 450MT is a seriously good A2 adventurist								
800NK Sport	£6,171	799cc twin	130mph*	94bhp**	45mpg*	Basically it's KTM 790 Duke with a few different parts and fresh looks. It's good and it's cheap.	8/10	Nov '23
700CL-X Heritage	£5,171	693cc twin	117mph	64bhp**	55mpg	Chirpy, fun, usable, good spec, long warranty. It's good… but no longer cheap next to finer rivals.	7/10	Mar '23
450MT	£5,699	449cc twin	112mph*	46bhp**	65mpg*	As good as a Ténéré on trails, extremely robust, good spec, keen price. Why buy anything else?	9/10	Mar '25
450SR S	£5,699	449cc twin	115mph*	46bhp**	65mpg	Eager yet smooth motor, agile handling, single-sider, TFT... it's as sporty as A2 gets. Impressive.	9/10	Oct '24
DUCATI ducatiuk.com, 0845 718500 *Bike's* choice: effective, fun and funky, the DesertX is so damn desirable								
Multistrada V4 Rally	£24,367	1158cc V4	155mph*	170bhp**	43mpg**	Most sophisticated, rounded, clever Ducati ever. Staggeringly complete. Pricey, yes. Also epic.	10/10	Mar '25
Diavel V4	£24,167	1158cc V4	150mph*	166bhp**	44mpg**	Caricature looks, raked stance, wild power, silly tail lights. And amazing. Not for everyone, mind.	8/10	Apr '23
Panigale V4 S	£27,651	1103cc V4	191mph	203bhp	39mpg	Stupid-fast, sharp, needs working to get the best out, but still feels mega to 'normal' folk. Wow.	9/10	Apr '25
Streetfighter V4 S	£23,661	1103cc V4	169mph	181bhp	34mpg	Fast, sexy, loud, desirable… but constantly a full-on experience. SP2 version (£32k) even sillier.	8/10	Jul '24
Scrambler 1100 Pro	£12,051	1079cc V-twin	110mph*	83bhp**	45mpg*	1100 Evo-engined, easy-riding Scrambler has charming twin and more comfort than 800s.	8/10	Nov '22
Streetfighter V2	£16,151	955cc V-twin	160mph*	151bhp**	45mpg*	Less power, speed and edge than previously – and much better for it. Cracking sporty naked.	8/10	Jun '25
Panigale V4 R	£39,151	998cc V4	195mph*	215bhp**	35mpg**	Screaming, sharp, ballistic homologation tool. Amazing. But cheaper S is as good for most of us.	8/10	Nov '23
DesertX	£17,467	937cc V-twin	130mph*	110bhp**	41mpg	Sexy dual-purpose tool perfectly balances road and off-road needs. Our 2022 Bike of the Year.	10/10	Oct '22
SuperSport 950	£16,367	937cc V-twin	145mph*	113bhp**	43mpg	Not super fast or whizzpop, but a top, usable, sporty (and overlooked) road bike for normal folk.	9/10	Jan '18
Monster	£11,767	937cc V-twin	135mph*	110bhp**	45mpg*	Light, fun, usable, quality roadster with badge appeal. Mega. SP (£14k) sharper but less usable.	10/10	Feb '22
Panigale V2 S	£17,167	890cc V-twin	150mph*	118bhp**	53mpg**	Lighter, friendlier and less 'grr' than any previous Ducati sportsbike, but still slick and fast. Ace.	9/10	May '25
Multistrada V2 S	£16,562	890cc V-twin	145mph*	114bhp**	47mpg	Refined like no Ducati twin before. Also comfy, swift, high-tech and top quality. Pricey but mega.	9/10	Apr '25
Scrambler Icon	£10,367	803cc V-twin	123mph	72bhp*	47mpg	Image and quality matched by much-improved dynamic. Easy in town, great on back roads.	8/10	Jan '24
Hyper' 698 Mono	£12,367	659cc single	123mph	76bhp**	59mpg	Fruitiest single ever is light, responsive, engaging. But it craves twisty roads and a skilled rider.	8/10	Oct '24

Joyous indeed

Own a Ducati Scrambler? Partial to joy? Good news. The Ducati Scrambler Days of Joy bash is happening on 12-13 July, Lake Garda, Italy. Ride through landscapes made for Instagram, test ride the latest versions of the Scrambler, and access the Univela Center with music, sun loungers and table football – all heavily Scrambler branded, of course. Oh, plus this year's event features a new activity: wingboarding. Yes, that crazy water sport where the boards sort of hover. No leathers for that bit. More on the Scrambler website.

ROAD TEST BACK ISSUES
are available digitally on iPad and Android

** *Claimed* * *Estimated*

BIKE	PRICE	ENGINE	TOP SPEED	POWER	MPG	BIKE VERDICT	RATING	TESTED
FANTIC fanticmotoruk.com *Bike's* choice: there are three versions of the Cabellero, but just go for the best colour (so that's the Scrambler)								
Caballero 700	£9,671	689cc twin	115mph*	74bhp**	46mpg*	Retro scrambler built around Yam's great MT-07 motor. Good, has its moments… but not ace.	7/10	Jan '24
Caballero 500	£6,121	449cc single	100mph*	43bhp**	60mpg	Rev-happy, ex-enduro single in a light, good-quality package. Frantic on long rides, but top fun.	8/10	Oct '19
HARLEY-DAVIDSON harley-davidson.com, 0871 6412508 *Bike's* choice: the Fat Bob has looks, finish, good ride… and funny name								
CVO Street Glide	£40,495	1977cc V-twin	120mph*	120bhp*	50mpg	Best ever H-D tourer. Refined, classy, with huge grunt and nimbleness. Unique experience.	9/10	Jan '24
Low Rider S	£19,795	1868cc V-twin	115mph	93bhp*	50mpg**	Top looks and noise, more fun to ride than you think. But better in California than Croydon.	6/10	Jan '20
CVO Road Glide	£40,495	1923cc V-twin	105mph*	105bhp**	43mpg**	The defining H-D full-dress tourer with extra bling. Luxurious, surprising, expensive… unique.	8/10	Sep '23
Street Glide Special	£27,495	1745cc V-twin	115mph*	40bhp*	45mpg*	Classic looks, decent suspension, good finish and latest 8v motor is the best yet. Fine thing.	8/10	Dec '16
Breakout	£25,195	1745cc V-twin	115mph*	75bhp*	50mpg**	Low-slung, drag-inspired cruiser that rides better than expected. Classy, refined hot-rod.	8/10	Dec '17
Street Bob	£14,995	1745cc V-twin	110mph*	75bhp*	50mpg**	Classic chopper-ish lines, clean handling, modern 8v power. But Fat Bob is far better.	6/10	Dec '17
Low Rider ST	£21,295	1923cc V-twin	115mph*	106bhp	40mpg*	Stonking motor, surprising handling, bold style, lovely finish. Odd riding position, otherwise fab.	8/10	Jul '22
Pan America Special	£17,295	1252cc V-twin	135mph**	148bhp**	43mpg	Comfy, composed, brisk, lots of equipment. Very good, but not quite a GS or Multistrada rival.	8/10	Sep '21
Sportster S	£15,145	1252cc V-twin	120mph*	119bhp**	50mpg	Fastest, smoothest, best handling, most techy Harley cruiser ever. Ace… but lacks the H-D feel.	8/10	Nov '21
Nightster Special	£14,495	975cc V-twin	120mph*	89bhp**	52mpg**	Smallest engine in H-D's range. Decent looks, modern ride, but lacks Harley soul. A bit… odd.	6/10	Aug '22
HONDA honda.co.uk/motorcycles, 0845 2008000 *Bike's* choice: Hornet's good, Blade's epic… but have you ridden an NT1100? Great tool								
GL1800 Gold Wing Tour	£25,649	1833cc flat-six	112mph	125bhp**	51mpg	Huge, OTT, but smart suspension, toys and utter refinement mean it's still the grand-tour king.	8/10	Dec '22
CBR1000RR-R Blade SP	£23,499	1000cc inline 4	185mph*	215bhp**	42mpg**	Revvy, focused, full of HRC-ness. But also refined, classy, and more usable than you think.	9/10	Feb '25
Africa Twin Adv' Sport	£17,649	1084cc twin	130mph*	94bhp	44mpg	All the tech, plush optional semi-active, classy feel, huge range. And daft switchgear. Hey-ho.	9/10	Nov '24
Africa Twin	£13,049	1084cc twin	130mph*	94bhp	47mpg	Feels like a big, refined enduro bike, so is different to a GS. Cheaper too. Daft switches and dash.	8/10	Jul '24
NT1100	£14,099	1084cc twin	123mph	97bhp	52mpg	Cross between Africa Twin and Deauville. Not exciting, but high-spec, plush, quietly ace tourer.	9/10	May '25
CMX1100 Rebel	£6,135	1084cc twin	125mph*	86bhp**	52mpg	Africa Twin motor in cheery, usable, well-made cruiser. Not plush, but fun and very affordable.	8/10	Jan '22
CB1000 Hornet SP	£9,999	1000cc inline 4	150mph*	155bhp	48mpg**	Powerful, fine spec, classy ride, and top fun. Ace. Makes all other supernakeds look expensive.	9/10	Jul '25
XL750 Transalp	£9,999	755cc twin	135mph*	91bhp*	58mpg	Smooth, easy to ride, great ergonomics, and cool colours. But revvy twin doesn't suit the bike.	8/10	Aug '23
CB750 Hornet	£6,999	755cc twin	140mph*	91bhp**	65mpg**	Simple, honest, fun, great spec, class-leading power – and affordable too. But GSX-8S is nicer…	9/10	Jul '23
X-ADV	£11,249	745cc twin	105mph*	54bhp**	70mpg*	Off-road scooter you'll never take off-road. Pricey too. But also practical, enjoyable and top fun.	8/10	Mar '25
Forza 750	£9,999	745cc twin	110mph*	54bhp**	70mpg	Capable bike with looks and practicality of a scooter. And DCT. Odd concept, ace execution.	9/10	May '21
NC750X	£7,849	745cc twin	115mph*	58bhp**	70mpg	Flexible twin, big mpg, agile, clever storage. Not flash, but very useful. DCT (£830) is worth it.	10/10	Nov '21
CBR650R E-Clutch	£9,899	649cc inline 4	138mph	86bhp	54mpg	Flexible, handsome, fun, fast-enough road sportsbike. Smart auto clutch is genuinely useful.	8/10	Aug '24
CB650R	£9,399	649cc inline 4	140mph	93bhp**	50mpg	Naked version of CBR (above) is fabulously balanced. Quality, dynamic, value all superb.	9/10	May '19
CBR600RR	£10,529	599cc inline 4	170mph*	119bhp**	52mpg**	Shrieking power, epic agility, pinpoint steering, top quality. Tiny and demanding, yes. But mega.	9/10	Oct '24
GB350S	£3,949	348cc single	85mph*	21bhp**	70mpg**	Charming retro with old-school quality. A lot slower than a Speed 400, but plush, classy, cheap.	8/10	Jun '25
CRF300L	£5,829	286cc single	80mph*	27bhp**	70mpg*	Fit green-laner, easy commuter, bit quicker than old 250. Rally (£6499) has big tank and screen.	7/10	Aug '22
Super Cub	£3,869	125cc single	65mph*	9.2bhp	124mpg	Descendent of iconic step-thru' is charming. Ownership by urban folk should be compulsory.	8/10	Jul '19
HUSQVARNA husqvarnamotorcycles.com/gb *Bike's* choice: Supermoto is desirable, funky, silly… and yet usable day-to-day								
Norden 901	£12,699	889cc twin	130mph*	103bhp**	63mpg**	Attractive reworking of KTM 890 Adventure. Capable, nicely made, but lacks a 'wow' moment.	7/10	Oct '22
Svartpilen 801	£10,499	799cc twin	130mph*	104bhp**	50mpg*	KTM 790 Duke motor in a classier, calmer chassis. Not cheap, but refined, good spec, nice feel.	8/10	Oct '24
701 Supermoto	£10,399	693cc single	121mph	71bhp	54mpg	Engaging, fun at sensible speed, frugal, sexy, friendlier than it looks. Proper middleweight tool.	9/10	Sep '17
701 Enduro	£12,299	693cc single	120mph*	71bhp	54mpg	Proper dirt bike, yet refined, frugal and plush on the road. Big-tank LR (long range) version, too.	9/10	Apr '19
Svartpilen 401	£5,599	375cc single	105mph*	43bhp**	65mpg*	Built for A2 riders avoiding the mainstream. Essentially KTM's fine 390 Duke with more style.	7/10	Jul '18
INDIAN indianmotorcycle.co.uk *Bike's* choice: classic character, modern quality, unique feel – Scout is a standout cruiser								
Chief Dark Horse	£15,195	1890cc V-twin	120mph*	89bhp*	60mpg	Big twin has stripped-back cool, walloping drive, surprising agility. Engaging trad' cruiser.	8/10	Feb '24
Chieftain PowerPlus	£27,595	1834cc V-twin	125mph*	127bhp**	40mpg*	Huge bagger with hugely grunty (134 lb.ft) and refined motor, full bling and tech. Even handles.	9/10	May '25
Challenger	£21,766	1770cc V-twin	112mph**	122bhp*	46mpg*	Full-on tourer with ace water-cooled motor, physics-defying chassis, full tech. Watch out, H-D.	8/10	Jan '20
101 Scout	£16,095	1250cc V-twin	120mph	110bhp	40mpg*	Impressive mix of trad' cruiser flair and sporty (ish) credentials. Engaging, amusing, classy.	8/10	Aug '24
FTR1200R Carbon	£16,695	1203cc V-twin	140mph*	123bhp**	38mpg	Stylish, high-quality, sporty retro with ace V-twin. We preferred it with the old 19in wheel, mind.	8/10	Nov '22
KAWASAKI kawasaki.co.uk, 01628 856750 *Bike's* choice: has to be the Ninja Z H2. Friendly, usable, yet suitably deranged								
Versys 1000 SE GT	£17,468	1043cc inline 4	144mph	118bhp**	42mpg	Top-spec Versys with all the toys, luxurious ride, luggage… Ace two-up tourer, but expensive.	7/10	Feb '24
Versys 1100 SE GT	£17,349	1099cc inline 4	144mph	119bhp	40mpg	Gutsy, high-rise, high-spec 'adventure tourer'. Ace pillion bike. Lacks wow factor, but a class act.	8/10	Apr '25
Ninja 1100SX	£14,999	1099cc inline 4	149mph	124bhp	41mpg	UK's fave sports tourer is smooth, refined, well equipped. Bit dated? Who cares – it's still great.	9/10	Apr '25
Ninja H2 SX SE	£25,815	998cc inline 4	186mph*	197bhp**	39mpg	Sports-touring exotica. Not perfect, but classy, usable, and that motor… Base H2 SX is £21,735.	8/10	Jun '19
Z H2 SE	£17,667	998cc inline 4	175mph*	197bhp**	34mpg	The impressive Z H2 (below) with fine semi-active ride. It's the thinking rider's supernaked.	9/10	Jul '21
Z H2	£17,465	998cc inline 4	175mph*	197bhp**	34mpg	Mega blown H2 motor in bespoke naked chassis. Far more road focus than supernaked rivals.	8/10	Oct '20
Ninja ZX-10RR	£25,971	998cc inline 4	180mph	189bhp	44mpg	The already-capable ZX-10R with tuned motor and fancy wheels: basically a base for racing.	9/10	Jun '18
Z900RS	£11,522	948cc inline 4	143mph	102bhp	51mpg	Z900 in retro clobber. And better for it – dynamic, feel and detail are great. SE (£13k) even better.	8/10	Nov '22

Changing times

Not so long since buying an MV Agusta was perhaps the reserve of those strong of character. The bikes were desirable, but could also be finicky and stubborn, and you couldn't help muse over things like longevity and spares. But now not only do MV make bikes as dynamically impressive as they are seductive, they also offer peace of mind: there's a five-year warranty on the Enduro Veloce and F3 Competizione, and the Ottantesimo Collection (80th birthday) versions of the Brutale, Dragster, Superveloce and F3. Goodness.

Listings

*** Claimed * Estimated*

BIKE	PRICE	ENGINE	TOP SPEED	POWER	MPG	BIKE VERDICT	RATING	TESTED
Z900	**£9,371**	**948cc inline 4**	**145mph***	**123bhp****	**52mpg****	If you grew up on inline fours, this is ace. Not as punchy as MT-09, but very good and well priced.	**7/10**	**Apr '25**
Z650RS	**£8,115**	**649cc twin**	**130mph***	**67bhp****	**65mpg****	Spot-on mix of modern Z650's abilities with cool '70s retro vibe. £150 extra for green? Worth it.	**8/10**	**Jan '22**
Versys 650	**£7,422**	**649cc twin**	**115mph***	**62bhp***	**54mpg***	Twin-cylinder all-rounder is knocking on, but latest extras keep it valid. Fine multi-purpose tool.	**8/10**	**Aug '22**
Vulcan S	**£7,615**	**649cc twin**	**115mph***	**61bhp****	**63mpg***	Affordable, good-looking, modern cruiser with ER-6 power. Surprising ability, keen price.	**8/10**	**Jan '22**
Ninja 650	**£6,967**	**649cc twin**	**130mph***	**67bhp****	**70mpg***	Z650 dressed up in ZX-10R costume. Comfy, easy-to-ride, cheery twin for J. Rea wannabes.	**9/10**	**May '17**
Z650	**£7,665**	**649cc twin**	**130mph***	**67bhp***	**70mpg***	Zed is fun, fit, frugal. Nice, but lacks sparkle next to a Hornet, MT-07 or Trident. It's knocking on…	**7/10**	**May '23**
Ninja 7 HEV	**£11,949**	**451cc twin**	**115mph***	**58bhp****	**85mpg**	World's first hybrid. Frugal,smooth, effortless on elec power. But also heavy, steady and pricey.	**7/10**	**Jan '24**
ZX-4RR	**£8,699**	**399cc four**	**130mph***	**76bhp****	**50mph***	Not A2, but a single-minded screaming race-rep. Small, demanding but also fabulous fun.	**8/10**	**Apr '24**
KOVE kovemotouk.com *Bike's* choice: surprising 800X rivals the Ténéré as a real dual-purpose tool. Fine thing								
800X Pro	**£8,499**	**799cc twin**	**130mph***	**81bhp**	**51mpg**	KTM 790-based motor, great chassis, fine spec. Not perfect, but ruddy close – it's superb value.	**9/10**	**Oct '24**
510X	**£5,999**	**498cc twin**	**110mph***	**47bhp****	**60mpg***	Impressive spec, decent performance, big tank, attractive price. Credible A2 adventure bike.	**8/10**	**Nov '24**
KTM ktm.co.uk *Bike's* choice: practical, verging on sensible, but also very silly. It's the 890 SMT for us, please								
Super Adventure R	**£18,199**	**1301cc V-twin**	**155mph***	**158bhp****	**44mpg**	Like a rocket-powered 'crosser with cruise, Bluetooth and comfort. Mega… but Multi' V4 better.	**9/10**	**Nov '23**
1290 Super Duke GT	**£16,803**	**1301cc V-twin**	**159mph**	**158bhp**	**45mpg**	Mad power, sports handling, all the toys and eats miles. Couple of iffy bits, otherwise ace.	**9/10**	**Jan '19**
1390 Super Duke R Evo	**£17,622**	**1350cc V-twin**	**165mph**	**178bhp**	**42mpg**	Mighty fast yet friendly, sharp but safe, and loads of gizmos. Surprisingly usable supernaked.	**9/10**	**Mar '23**
990 Duke	**£10,246**	**947cc twin**	**145mph***	**121bhp****	**60mpg****	More mature and finer quality than earlier Dukes, but still loopy. KTM's best naked… but pricey.	**9/10**	**Jan '25**
890 SMT	**£11,434**	**899cc twin**	**130mph****	**103bhp***	**63mpg**	Sharper and more engaging than an adventure bike, more practical than a naked. And a bit silly.	**8/10**	**Feb '24**
890 Adventure	**£11,999**	**889cc twin**	**130mph***	**103bhp****	**63mpg****	The previous 790 with extra bhp, smoother delivery, tweaked chassis, more tech. Very good.	**8/10**	**Jan '21**
690 Enduro R	**£9,835**	**690cc single**	**115mph***	**73bhp****	**60mpg***	Super-clever Duke/Husky 701 lump in long-legged trailie. Pukka, classy, dual-purpose tool.	**8/10**	**Feb '16**
390 Adventure	**£6,299**	**373cc single**	**105mph***	**43bhp****	**56mpg**	Chirpy A2-legal adventurer looks like a 1290 (sort of). But it's basically a 390 Duke in wellies.	**8/10**	**Jul '20**
390 Duke	**£5,499**	**373cc single**	**108mph**	**41bhp**	**70mpg***	Revvy, eager motor in agile 125 chassis? Yes. Looks like the 1290 and less toy-like than it was.	**7/10**	**Jun '17**
LANGEN langenmotorcycles.co.uk; 01942 724059 *Bike's* choice: there's one model, which limits choice. Luckily it's amazing								
Two Stroke	**£32,580**	**249cc V-twin**	**130mph***	**74bhp****	**40mpg***	Pricey, yes. But stroker is deliciously engineered, fast, raw. We love it… but £33k is a lot for a 250.	**8/10**	**Dec '23**
MASH mashmotorcycles.co.uk; 01264 889012 *Bike's* choice: go for the X-Ride (but budget for new tyres and suspension)								
650 X-Ride	**£4,699**	**644cc single**	**90mph***	**40bhp****	**60mpg***	Ex-Honda Dominator motor in 70s-style trailie. Good quality, keen price, let down by chassis.	**5/10**	**Apr '21**
Five Hundred 400	**£4,455**	**398cc single**	**80mph***	**28bhp****	**70mpg****	French brand, made in China, Honda-based motor. Iffy details, odd name, but cheap and fun.	**6/10**	**Dec '17**
MOTO GUZZI uk.motoguzzi.it *Bike's* choice: unique image, sweet ride, classy quality; it's not fast or clever but V85 is lovely								
V100 Mandello S	**£14,900**	**1042cc V-twin**	**135mph***	**108bhp**	**50mpg**	Sports-tourer is classy, comfy, capable, charismatic. Serious alternative to a Honda or BMW.	**9/10**	**Sep '23**
Stelvio	**£13,850**	**1042cc V-twin**	**135mph***	**113bhp****	**50mpg***	Brilliant V100 (above) in capable, classy, convincing adventure guise. Not a GS, but very good.	**9/10**	**Nov '24**
V85 TT	**£11,400**	**853cc V-twin**	**120mph***	**79bhp****	**50mpg***	Fabulous adventure mix of old-school charm, proper tech, comfort, and a cheerful dynamic.	**9/10**	**May '24**
V85 Strada	**£10,600**	**853cc V-twin**	**120mph***	**79bhp***	**50mph***	Stripped-back V85 has less tech, fewer fixings, but lighter wheels for sharper handling. Decent.	**8/10**	**May '24**
V9 Bobber	**£9,750**	**853cc V-twin**	**110mph***	**64bhp****	**55mpg***	Pleasing V-twin in a trendy, well-made package. Doesn't sell well so haggle yourself a top deal.	**8/10**	**Jun '16**
V7 Special	**£8,000**	**853cc V-twin**	**115mph***	**64bhp****	**63mpg**	Style, ride and badge all spot-on. 850 V-twin isn't as grunty as a Street Twin, but we forgive it.	**9/10**	**Jul '21**
MOTO MORINI motomorini.eu *Bike's* choice: you might need to be brave, but the Milano is a convincingly authentic Morini								
Milano	**£12,700**	**1187cc V-twin**	**145mph***	**114bhp****	**42mpg**	Instant chunky power, firm and direct chassis, neat 70s paint. Buying is a gamble, but it's cool.	**8/10**	**Nov '19**
X-Cape	**£6,999**	**649cc twin**	**109mph***	**59bhp****	**49mpg**	Made in China with CFMoto engine. Great spec, good quality, rides well. No Ténéré, but cheap.	**7/10**	**Mar '22**
MV Agusta mvagusta.co.uk, 0844 4128450 *Bike's* choice: latest Brutale is refined, usable, yet still exotic								
Enduro Veloce	**£20,000**	**931cc inline 3**	**149mph****	**122bhp****	**40mpg***	Fast, accurate, inspiring, surprisingly complete adventurer. But no use on trails. Expensive, too.	**7/10**	**Jan '25**
Dragster 800 RR SCS	**£18,220**	**798cc inline 3**	**150mph***	**138bhp***	**45mpg**	Expensive, yes. But also classy, high-spec, comfy, and refined like no MV before. Impressive.	**8/10**	**Jan '22**
Superveloce	**£18,980**	**798cc inline 3**	**160mph***	**146bhp****	**41mpg**	Super-sporty F3 in semi-retro dress. Fast, sharp, sounds top, looks superb, quite demanding.	**8/10**	**Mar '23**
Turismo Veloce Rosso	**£13,930**	**798cc inline 3**	**136mph**	**110bhp****	**48mpg***	Adventure bike? Nah, it's like a high-rise sportsbike. So-so ride, busy dash, but it's good.	**8/10**	**Jan '19**
Brutale 800 RR	**£15,590**	**798cc inline 3**	**153mph****	**138bhp****	**40mpg****	Top engine, nimble, great looks, ridiculous hard ride. Semi-auto clutch version a bit gimmicky.	**6/10**	**Apr '19**
NORTON nortonmotorcycles.com; 0121 565 4411 *Bike's* choice: Think Norton, think Commando… and it's good to ride, too								
V4SV	**£44,000**	**1200cc V4**	**180mph***	**185bhp****	**40mpg***	Not as slick as an M1000RR, expensive. So what? Brit sportsbike is solid, fast, beautiful, unique.	**8/10**	**Dec '23**
V4CR	**£42,000**	**1200cc V4**	**175mph***	**185bhp****	**40mpg***	Sculpted café racer is modern and old-school at the same time. Pricey but effective exotica.	**9/10**	**Oct '23**
Commando 961 SP	**£16,999**	**961cc twin**	**125mph***	**77bhp****	**40mpg***	Traditional pushrod Brit twin for the modern world. Sweet handling, well made, lots of character.	**9/10**	**Mar '23**
ROYAL ENFIELD royalenfield.com/uk; 0844 412 8450 *Bike's* choice: Himalayan 450 is a superb mix of performance, quality and price								
Bear 650	**£6,749**	**648cc twin**	**110mph***	**47bhp****	**60mpg***	Splendid Inter' (below) in Scrambler form. Chunky looks, USD forks, longer suspension. Good.	**9/10**	**Mar '25**
Interceptor	**£6,599**	**648cc twin**	**110mph**	**44bhp**	**60mpg**	Charming twin has authentic feel, fine looks and attractive price. Think Indian-made Guzzi V7.	**9/10**	**Mar '23**
Himalayan 450	**£5,850**	**452cc single**	**90mph***	**40bhp****	**78mpg****	Rugged, functional appeal, now with more oomph and improved ride and quality. Great bike.	**9/10**	**Jul '24**
Guerrilla 450	**£4,850**	**452cc single**	**100mph***	**39bhp****	**83mpg**	Roadster version of Himi'. Great engine, otherwise a bit 'meh' – not as 'right' as a Speed 400.	**7/10**	**Feb '25**
Classic 350	**£4,619**	**349cc single**	**72mph**	**19bhp**	**79mpg**	The hugely successful Meteor dressed up like an old Bullet. Easy-going basic Sunday plodder.	**7/10**	**Aug '22**
Meteor	**£4,219**	**349cc single**	**72mph**	**19bhp**	**79mpg**	Simple, chirpy character, light handling, nicely made, and super cheap. Fast? No way. Fun? Yes.	**8/10**	**Nov '21**
SUZUKI suzuki-gb.co.uk; 0845 850 8800 *Bike's* choice: V-Strom 800DE is everything a mid-size adventure should be								
Hayabusa	**£18,599**	**1340cc inline 4**	**186mph***	**187bhp****	**42mpg****	There are more powerful bikes. But nothing goes stupid fast with the ease and class of a Busa.	**8/10**	**Jul '22**
V-Strom 1050XT	**£13,865**	**1037cc V-twin**	**137mph**	**99bhp**	**52mpg**	Loads of gizmos, amazing screen, plush-yet-secure ride, solid motor. It's no GS… but top value.	**8/10**	**Dec '20**

Never had it so good

» If the question in the pub quiz is 'name a great-value big naked bike', chances are we'll write down Suzuki Bandit 1200. There's never been so much bike for such little outlay. Except that the 1996 Bandit cost £11,800 – or at least that's what the original £5999 is when inflated into today's money. That's for a bike with an old air/oil-cooled motor and the technology levels of a plank. Compare it to the new all-singing Honda CB1000 Hornet SP (see p32) with all its power, rider aids and bling for £10k. Aren't we lucky? (We still love a Bandit, mind…)

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*** Claimed * Estimated*

BIKE	PRICE	ENGINE	TOP SPEED	POWER	MPG	BIKE VERDICT	RATING	TESTED
GSX-S1000GX	£14,799	999cc inline 4	145mph**	150bhp*	45mpg*	The GT (below) in adventure-sports guise. Not perfect, but ace suspension, toys, ride and feel.	8/10	Apr '25
GSX-S1000GT	£12,899	999cc inline 4	155mph*	150bhp*	46mpg**	GSX-R oomph, comfort, lots of toys, fine looks. Trad' proper-fast-yet-friendly sports tourer.	8/10	Apr '25
Katana	£12,699	999cc inline 4	152mph	147bhp	46mpg	Superb GSX-S supernaked with sharp 80s-inspired styling. Bold yet usable, and underrated.	8/10	Nov '19
V-Strom 800DE	£13,999	776cc twin	125mph*	83bhp**	52mpg	Gutsy motor, proper comfort, better suspension than rivals, and fine spec list too. Great bike.	9/10	Aug '23
GSX-8R	£8,999	776cc twin	130mph*	82bhp**	52mpg*	Think GSX-R mixed with a commuter. Easy to ride, friendly, but also grunty, agile, plush. Lovely.	9/10	Dec '24
GSX-8S	£8,299	776cc twin	130mph*	82bhp**	50mpg*	Usable grunt, secure handling, fine ride, nicely made. Pricier than MT-07 and Hornet, but better.	9/10	Jul '23
V-Strom 650 XT	£8,965	645cc V-twin	115mph*	60bhp*	45mpg	£700 over the base model (below) gets you hand guards and wire wheels. Worth it for the looks.	7/10	Jul '17
SV650	£7,165	645cc V-twin	122mph	74bhp	50mpg	Chirpy, cheerful, usable, quick, proven, though Yam MT-07 has a bit more zip and charm.	7/10	Apr '19
GSX-R125	£5,078	124cc single	80mph*	15bhp**	123mpg**	Perky motor, better power-to-weight than rivals, and cheaper. Won't suit big-boned, mind.	9/10	Nov '17
TRIUMPH triumphmotorcycles.co.uk *Bike's* choice: Speed Twin 1200 isn't perfect, but it's flippin' compelling								
Rocket 3 GT	£22,695	2458cc inline 3	138mph**	165bhp**	35mpg	Huge motor is amazing, handling is ridiculous, but firm ride and sheer bulk limit use as 'real' GT.	8/10	Oct '24
Rocket 3 R	£21,995	2458cc inline 3	138mph**	165bhp**	35mpg	Cruiser? Hardly. With a stiff chassis, handling and crazy grunt, the R is a Mad Max supernaked.	8/10	Oct '24
Tiger 1200 Rally Pro	£18,295	1200cc inline 3	140mph*	148bhp**	55mpg**	Lots of power, tech, comfort and class, and they've stopped the vibes, too. Well done, Triumph.	9/10	Aug '24
Speed Twin 1200 RS	£14,495	1200cc twin	130mph*	96bhp**	50mpg	Part classic thrummer, part wheel-lifting blingy supernaked. Classy, fast, desirable roadster.	9/10	Feb '25
Scrambler 1200 XE	£13,295	1200cc twin	130mph*	89bhp**	56mpg	Easy-going B-lane thrummer is classy, rewarding, sensibly priced. Think retro adventure bike.	8/10	Jan '25
Speedmaster	£12,995	1200cc twin	110mph*	76bhp**	55mpg**	Low-slung Bobber transformed for the USA with beach 'bars, shiny bits and pillion perch.	8/10	Sep '18
Bonneville Bobber	£12,995	1200cc twin	120mph*	77bhp**	56mpg	Oodles of grunt, capable chassis, spot-on stance and feel. Perfect blend of modern and retro.	9/10	Jan '22
Bonneville T120	£11,795	1200cc twin	120mph*	79bhp**	54mpg	Lolloping grunt, steadfast chassis, top finish. Hasn't Street Twin's agility, but has finer ride.	9/10	Sep '18
Speed Triple RR	£17,950	1160cc inline 3	150mph	166bhp	39mpg	RS (below) with fairing, GSX-R riding stance, posh suspension. Discontinued – get one for £13k.	8/10	Jun '22
Speed Triple RS	£17,495	1160cc inline 3	175mph*	178bhp**	38mpg	Awesome motor, ace outright handling, full tech. Mega. Bit stiff and focused for the road, mind.	8/10	Jun '25
Scrambler 900	£9,795	900cc twin	110mph*	54bhp**	60mpg	The Bonnie platform in laid-back, urban-ready scrambler form. Charming, if a little bit 'meh'.	7/10	Jan '24
Bonneville T100	£9,595	900cc twin	110mph*	54bhp**	60mpg	All the style and easy-going pleasures of the T120. Makes 24bhp less, but is £1900 (!) cheaper.	9/10	Sep '18
Speed Twin 900	£8,795	900cc twin	110mph*	64bhp**	60mpg	Handsome, pleasing, well-made retro with decent grunt and easy-to-flick chassis. Really good.	9/10	Dec '22
Tiger 900 Rally Pro	£14,495	888cc inline 3	130mph*	106bhp**	60mpg**	High-tech, high-spec adventurer really can go (almost) anywhere. Brisk, smooth, plush, lovely.	9/10	Mar '24
Tiger 900 GT Pro	£13,895	888cc inline 3	130mph*	106bhp**	60mpg**	Great spec, comfort, usability, quality. Top adventurer-tourer, but Rally (above) has more pizazz.	9/10	Nov '24
Tiger Sport 800	£10,995	798cc inline 3	145mph*	113bhp**	50mpg*	The brilliant 660 (below) with more wallop and a better spec. It's like Triumph's greatest hits. Ace.	9/10	Jun '25
Street Triple 765 RS	£11,295	765cc inline 3	145mph*	128bhp**	53mpg**	Best road-going sporty bike Triumph have ever made. Ace. Less-blingy R (£10,295) is great too.	9/10	Oct '24
Tiger Sport 660	£8,945	660cc inline 3	135mph*	80bhp**	60mpg**	660 Trident repackaged as a practical high-riding all-rounder. Giant-slaying brilliance.	9/10	Mar '23
Daytona 660	£8,595	660cc inline 3	135mph*	94bhp**	58mpg**	Like a three-cylinder CBR650R. Fit motor, comfy, but not a sharp as rivals. Missing an edge.	8/10	Dec '24
Trident 660	£7,895	660cc inline 3	129mph	75bhp	54mpg	Affordable and friendly like an MT-07, sweet handling like a Street Trip'. Bit stiff, otherwise great..	9/10	May '23
Speed 400	£5,195	398cc single	100mph*	40bhp**	80mpg**	A2-legal bike with ample performance, quality and 'proper Triumph' feel. Big seller for a reason...	9/10	Jun '25
VOGE vogeuk.co.uk, 01932 358000 *Bike's* choice: it's not a premium model, but 900's value is remarkable								
DS900X	£8671	895cc twin	125mph*	94bhp**	60mpg*	By Loncin, who make BMW motors. F900GS power, fine ride, staggering spec for the money.	8/10	Jan '25
YAMAHA yamaha-motor.co.uk, 01932 358000 *Bike's* choice: sporty and engaging, yet friendly and fun – MT-09 is a proper device								
R1M	£24,460	998cc inline 4	186mph	192bhp	40mpg	MotoGP-derived electronics + track-focused superbike = incredible. Limited availability.	9/10	Feb '21
MT-10 SP	£16,510	998cc inline 4	153mph	152bhp	38mpg	Already amazing MT-10 with R1 SP's electronic suspenders. Great, if not obviously better.	9/10	May '17
MT-10	£14,210	998cc inline 4	153mph	152bhp	38mpg	Not as wild as some rivals, but cheaper, easier to ride, and still epic. Thinking rider's supernaked.	9/10	Aug '22
Niken GT	£16,210	890cc inline 3	117mph	113bhp**	45mpg*	Three-wheeler has more front-end grip than anything, fit motor, fine touring ability Ace, but odd.	8/10	Aug '23
Tracer 9 GT+	£14,910	890cc inline 3	146mph	107bhp	57mpg	The defining 'mid-size' upright sports tourer. Not the cheapest, but easily the best. Fabulous.	10/10	Feb '24
XSR900 GP	£12,506	890cc inline 3	135mph*	117bhp**	50mpg*	If this is the future of retro, sign us up. XSR in '80s fag-packet sportsbike form is a glorious thing.	9/10	Sep '24
R9	£12,250	890cc inline 3	135mph*	117bhp**	50mpg*	MT-09 transformed into a sportsbike. It's sharp, accurate, fast, but friendly and usable, too. Top.	9/10	Jun '25
Tracer 9	£11,010	890cc inline 3	146mph	107bhp	47mpg	Adventurer presence, comfort, practicality – it's a top road bike. High-spec GT worth the extra.	9/10	Apr '23
XSR900	£10,610	890cc inline 3	130mph	107bhp	49mpg	Ace MT-09 reworked into a convincing '80s flat-bar superbike. Cool, fun, sexy, but a bit stiff.	9/10	Nov '22
MT-09 SP	£11,310	890cc inline 3	130mph*	117bhp**	48mpg	Öhlins shock, classy forks, R1M paint job, brilliant engine. Superb everyday semi-supernaked.	9/10	Oct '24
MT-09	£10,100	890cc inline 3	130mph*	117bhp**	49mpg*	Top triple has new-found handling prowess and tech, but keeps its usable playfulness. Proper.	9/10	Jan '25
Ténéré 700	£10,404	689cc twin	120mph*	72bhp**	55mpg*	Retakes position as the defining mid-size adventurer. Classy, capable and fun on road or trail.	9/10	Jul '25
Tracer 7	£8,810	689cc twin	125mph*	70bhp	56mpg	Super-fun MT-07 with practical niceties. The datum for all-rounder value. GT even better.	9/10	Aug '20
R7	£8,910	689cc twin	130mph*	72bhp**	56mpg*	More than a faired MT-07. Lacks a bit of wow but properly sporty, ace in corners, fun, affordable.	8/10	Aug '22
XSR700	£8,260	689cc twin	119mph	70bhp	49mpg	MT-07 in period costume. Proof retro looks can work with a modern dynamic. LC paint is great.	9/10	Jun '16
MT-07	£7,510	689cc twin	122mph*	74bhp	48mpg	Fun, capable, perky, appealing, good value. Great bike, but Honda Hornet makes it feel dated.	9/10	May '23
R3	£6,405	321cc twin	102mph*	41bhp**	65mpg	Light, revvy, fun-to-ride, well finished. Ability and spec fight for title of best A2 sportsbike.	8/10	May '19
R125	£5,302	125cc single	80mph*	15bhp	92mpg	R1 looks, big bike feel, clever engine. Easy to see why they sell so many to enthusiastic teens.	8/10	May '19
ZERO zeromotorcycles.com, +3172 5112014 *Bike's* choice: SR/S is good enough to convert stubborn petrolheads								
SR/S Premium	£20,495	electric motor	124mph**	110bhp**	242mpc	Fast, torquey, smooth, hi-spec, great to ride. Range and charge time bearable. Price a bit salty.	8/10	Jul '22
S	£14,540	electric motor	86mph**	59bhp**	200mpc	Simple commuter has basic chassis, slow charging and ain't cheap, but costs peanuts to run.	6/10	Dec '20

Hacking and chopping

Triumph have announced 'Originals', a custom bike-building competition using the current Bonneville range. Eight teams from the UK, US, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, France, Italy and Thailand have been challenged to deploy their hacksaws, spanners and spray cans to create the most original bike they can. The creations will be judged against different criteria, with the shortlisted bikes thrown to a public vote. We'd like to offer this Triumph from the 1981 Kent Custom Show as inspiration. Look at those forks. Be a nailed-on win.

[**Head to toe**]

Jacket 'n' jeans

Casual looks, comfort and great in hot weather.
Michael Neeves highlights his summer costume

ALPINESTARS SMX AIR JACKET £234.99

This summer jacket has been twice around southern Europe over the past year and still looks like new. It's light and keeps you cool thanks to more perforation than a Yorkshire Tea bag. Thin, windproof inner jacket offers extra warmth in lower temperatures (for a soft southerner like me that's sub-20°C). I was drawn by its luminous orange flashes, but they're more KTM than Marlboro. gb.alpinestars.com

BULL-IT MEN'S MASTIFF £234.99

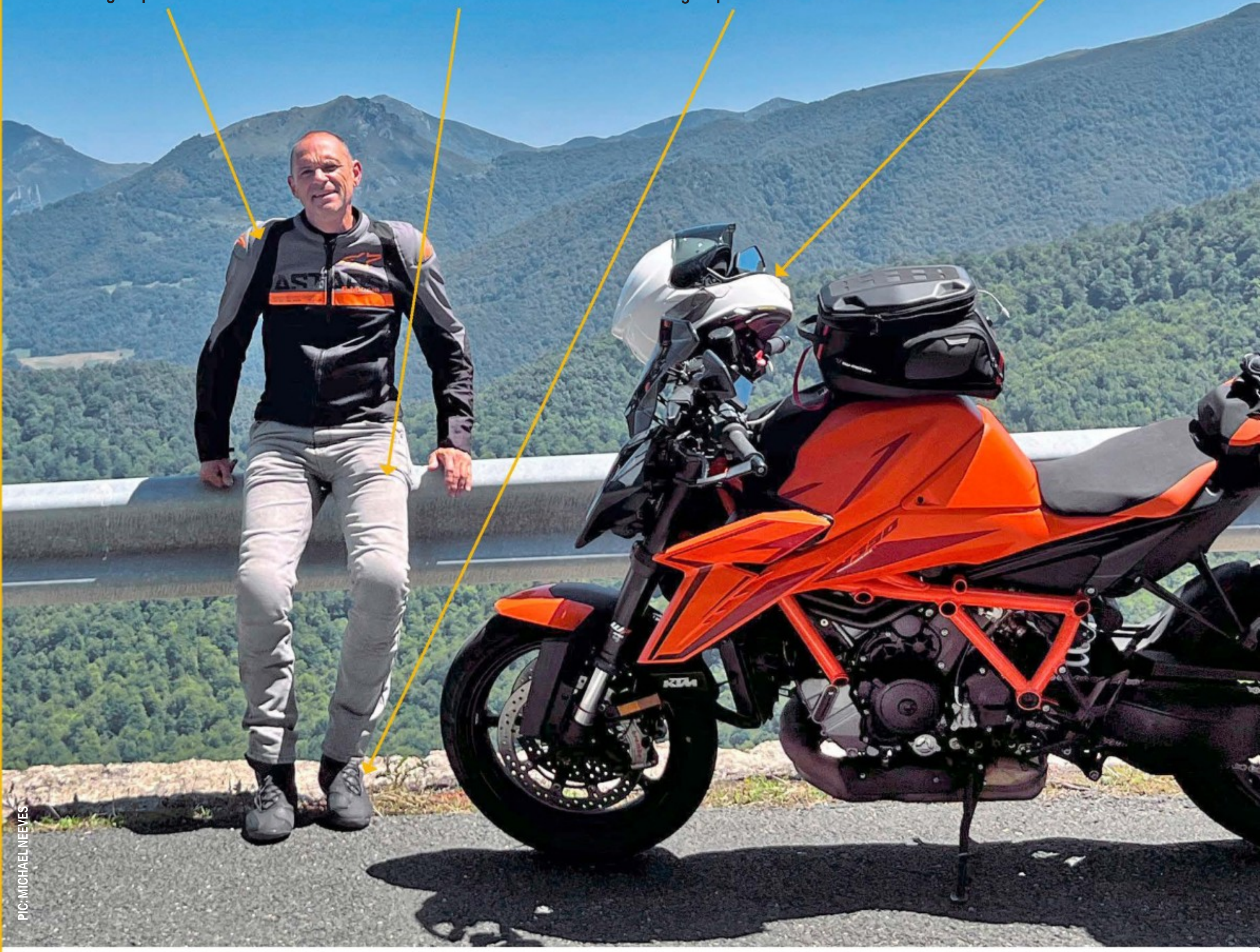
Armoured Bull-it jeans have been a staple of my riding kit for years. I've worn the same pair of blue jeans more or less constantly in all that time and they're still in great shape. I'm still new to these grey Mastiffs, but they fit beautifully, look just like regular jeans and ooze the same Bull-it quality and attention to detail. bull-it.com

ALPINESTARS FASTBACK 2 DRYSTAR WATERPROOF SHOES £189.99

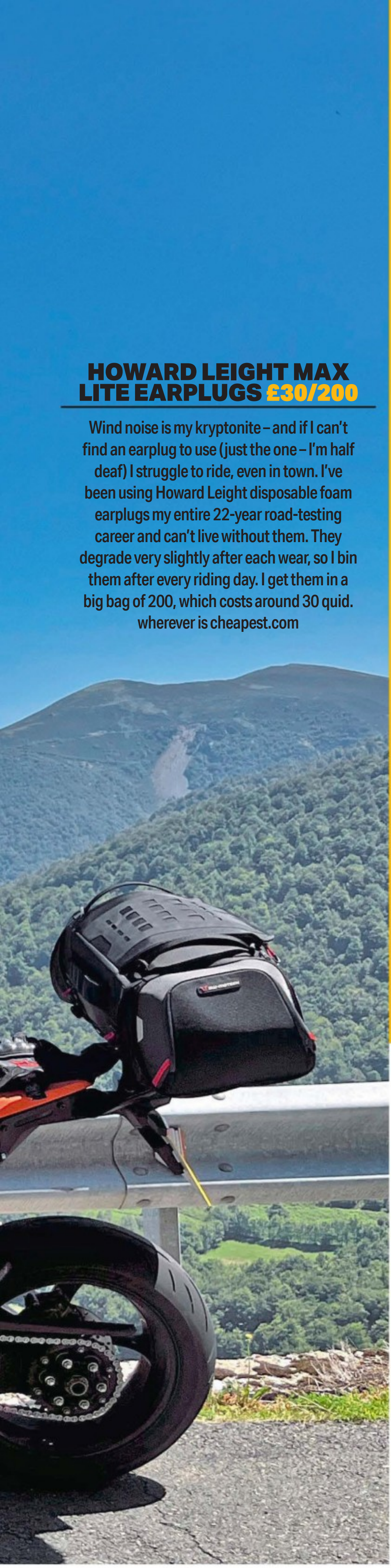
Whenever there's a chance of rain these make an appearance. I don't get on with full-on touring boots nowadays; these are lighter and less clumpy, but still warm and waterproof, and not too hot in the summer. They're inspired by car racing boots, but have reinforced heel, ankle and toe sections. The soles are sturdy, but after three years have started to wear through around the toes. gb.alpinestars.com

SHOEI GT-AIR 3 £529.99

This sports-touring helmet gets more than its fair share of use on tests and commutes, but comes into its own on tours. I love how light and quiet it is, the venting, quality of the visor (although it can be stiff to crack open) – it's easy to wear all day, whatever the weather. Quality is top-notch and it fits perfectly, thanks to Shoei's (50 quid) Personal Fitting System. shoeiassured.co.uk



PIC: MICHAEL NEEVES



HOWARD LEIGHT MAX LITE EARPLUGS £30/200

Wind noise is my kryptonite – and if I can't find an earplug to use (just the one – I'm half deaf) I struggle to ride, even in town. I've been using Howard Leight disposable foam earplugs my entire 22-year road-testing career and can't live without them. They degrade very slightly after each wear, so I bin them after every riding day. I get them in a big bag of 200, which costs around 30 quid.
wherever is cheapest.com

[Know it all]

American auctions

Honda spares guru **David Silver** has an interesting sideline: making money in America

I go to Mecum [the world's biggest classic bike auction] each year and sell bikes I bought in the UK. I've noticed there's a culture difference and you can exploit the market differences.

What I realised was that some bikes are viewed differently. Here in the UK, if it's not a well-known bike, or it's sold as seen, or it's an unsexy brand, the thought process tends to be 'am I going to get it going? Where will I get parts for it?', and so on. In the US they tend just to think 'that looks cool', and worry about logistics afterwards – or they're buying it to look at in their collection so don't care about the practicalities.

For example, I've bought Italian bikes made by long-deceased brands at auctions in the UK for not much money, and when I take them to Mecum before they go up on stage you get loads of people saying 'wow, that looks great!'. There's very little negativity, so you can – often – get a good price.

Another example would be the Ural I've just bought [at auction in the UK]. Generally, Ural is a brand most Brits look at and go 'yuk'. But it's been well restored, runs and looks really cool. I think that will do well in the US because it's rare – and the fact it's a 1965, Soviet-made bike will get the attention of collectors.

Honda CBX1000: don't jump on the bandwagon

You have to choose carefully though. One year we got fantastic prices for CBX1000s, then the following year there were 45 CBX1000s for sale. And guess what? The price came straight down again. You need to get in there first, not repeat what you did last year. Generally I would caution beginners from trying it though. I've been doing it for 10 years and in 2024 I lost money on half the bikes I took over. But I made more on the ones I got right, which covered the losses. It's a right old gamble and the tariffs will make it a whole lot harder. But it's good fun.

» Need Honda spares? You need DavidSilverSpares.co.uk

[The quick tyre thing for...]

Repairing punctures

Grand Pitstop £36.99

amazon.co.uk

» I was sceptical, but this works a treat. The gun comes in a pencil case-style pouch with tools for reaming the hole once you've extracted the nail/thorn/whatever, assorted attachments, and 15 lubed-up wee mushroom things. It fires the mushroom into the hole, head end first, where it completes the seal when you inflate the tyre. Trim down with the included super-sharp blade, and job jobbed. I've plugged a Moto Guzzi V85 and my son's Lexmoto 50 so far – both took just a couple of minutes and worked a treat. Luckily, both punctures were found at home, although the pouch is small enough to go under most seats (you'll need a portable compressor too; super-compact 12V or battery ones start at around £20). The plug is intended just as a temporary fix and they recommend not going over 50mph. A fresh bag of 15 mushrooms is £6 should you live near a tack factory. *MA*

[**Out & about**]

Strom in a teacup

Paul Lang doesn't get adventure bikes, so we've given him our **Suzuki V-Strom 800RE**. Tony Hoare takes him on a road trip to try to expand his horizons – and records their intercom conversation…

Words and photography **Paul Lang, Tony Hoare**

Tony Hoare: Testing, testing, one, two, one, two. Can you hear me, mate?

Paul Lang: Loud and clear. Can we record ourselves on these Cardio intercoms? Over.

TH: Yep. But it's Cardo, not Cardio. We don't have to pedal. And please do not say 'copy', 'roger' or 'over' again for the duration of this trip.

PL: Copy that. So, today you get fish and chips for lunch, and I get to listen to you telling me adventure bikes are better than I think? And that I should like our Suzuki V-Strom 800RE?

TH: Sounds like I get the better end of that deal. Let's get some miles done and see how you feel at the end of the day.

PL: I'm open-minded and ready to roll. Where are we off to?

TH: It doesn't really matter. That's kinda the point – we can go anywhere. But how about the Norfolk coast and that chippy you're always banging on about? I can smell the vinegar already.

PL: Roger.

TH: You can definitely stop that one. Roger is my dad's name. Very disconcerting.

PL: Copy.

TH: Hmm…

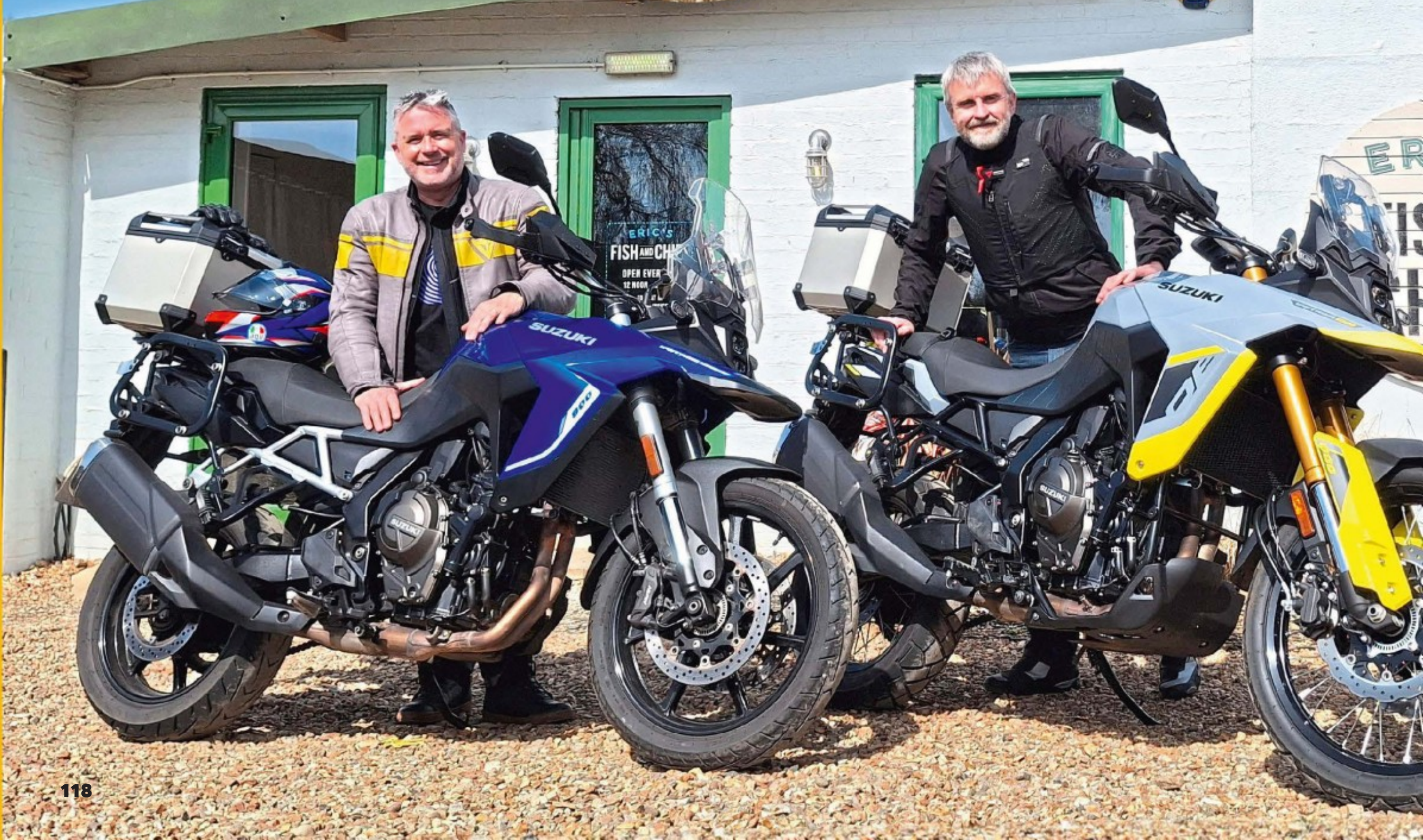
PL: Educate me. What's the difference between my V-Strom and your V-Strom?

TH: This is the 800DE version. I've got spoked wheels and the front is a 21-incher, as well as chunkier tyres, wider 'bars, fancy wavy brake discs, longer-travel suspension with more adjustment, a higher seat and footpegs with removable rubbers. It's all to make it more suited to a bit of trail riding. Your 800RE is more about road riding, and unless it goes wrong we won't be taking in any dirt today.

PL: Alright, Mr Spec List, stop showing off. At least I have a jacket to match your bike.

Wait, where are the peas?

Strom vs Lang vs Hoare vs Strom. Or something



IC'S
SH AND
HIPS

‘I expect to feel like I’m steering the Titanic into proper corners’

RE is a giggle leant over (not shown)

TH: That you do. Right then – what exactly it is you have against adventure bikes?

PL: I’ve ridden a sportsbike to World Ducati Weekend, to the middle of Germany in a day on a big naked, and buzzed around the TT course on a moped. But I’ve never felt the need for an adventure bike. Their height makes my short legs wobble in fear that I’ll be trapped under it if I topple over. And I expect them to feel like I’m steering the Titanic when I get into proper corners.

TH: I’ve got my work cut out here… Remind me: how did you feel after those trips?

PL: I was broken and didn’t want to see those bikes ever again. But I had fun getting to those destinations, and that’s all I care to remember.

TH: Have you ever considered you could have both? The journey doesn’t have to be painful. With a bike like this you’re sat comfortably, with loads of legroom and less weight on your wrists.

PL: Yes, you’re right, and this has been easy-breezy so far. But we’ve been pootling along. Wait till we get to some decent B-roads.

TH: That’s no bother. Let’s give the boring coast road a swerve and take the back roads towards Brancaster. Take the left just after the Carpenters Arms.

PL: Right, now I’m getting it. This is a giggle when you realise you’re leaning it over way further than you should – and it’s easy to do that because of the control. The steering feels surprisingly sharp and precise too, so I’m not having to give constant input. And I notice that I’m very relaxed, without any anxiety to perform. This means I can take in the scenery and enjoy the ride.

TH: You’re turning to my way of thinking, Langy. Be careful… you’ll be googling peaked helmets next.

PL: I’ve not finished yet. The Suzuki’s twin-cylinder engine has plenty of grunt, and it loves punching out of corners. Anything larger or more powerful would be a waste of horses. I know I wouldn’t be any faster on a superbike, and certainly not safer. Or as relaxed.

Look, there’s the Wash monster going out…

Ache-free adventuring. What’s not to like?

Clockwise from top left: 99 in a pot a flaky choice; those sails will soon be turning at Langy's latest wind; any rich teas to go with those cuppas?

TH: Agreed.

PL: Anyway, look – I spy the chippy. Love you, Eric!

TH: Feed me, Langy. And don't forget my peas… freshly mushed please.

PL: This is some of the nicest battered cod I have had in my life. Pudding?

TH: What did you call me, honey? Oh, I see… What about ice cream in Sunny Hunny?

PL: Genius.

TH: Wow, there are a lot of bikes here today. Still enjoying yourself?

PL: I've noticed that no one is noticing our bikes. The RE's looks are growing on me a bit, and the DE has a bit of style, but neither of these will ever take my breath away when I open the garage door.

V-Strom RE vs V-Strom DE

	LANGY'S BIKE **Suzuki V-Strom 800RE**	**TONY'S BIKE** **Suzuki V-Strom 800DE**
Price	£9699	£10,999
Engine type	Liquid-cooled 8v parallel twin	Liquid-cooled 8v parallel twin
Engine size	776cc	776cc
Power	83bhp	83bhp
Torque	58 lb.ft	58 lb.ft
Fuel capacity	20 litres	20 litres
Seat height	825mm	855mm
Weight	223kg	230kg
Fuel consumption	64mpg	64mpg
Wheels	19in front, 17in rear	21in front, 17in rear
Wheel type	Cast alloy and tubeless	Spoked with inner tubes

TH: Fair point. But I don't want to look at it, I want to ride it. These are designed to do a job, not look pretty.

PL: They're like hammer-action power drills, designed to deliver with precision when called on. My hammer drill never lets me down.

TH: I've heard all I need to know about your hammer drill. Let's get out of here…

PL: The return leg is usually the hardest slog of a trip, but I feel like I could ride into the night. I wish the RE's screen was adjustable via a lever, similar to a BMW F900XR, but I'm picking at nits. Maybe I need to hang up my knee sliders and embrace biking life with a top box and… whoa, look! A windmill. I love a windmill, me. Come on.

TH: It has to have sails, otherwise it's just a tall, thin, round house.

PL: It shuts in 10 minutes. Quick brew?

TH: I'll be Mother. So, do you get adventure bikes now?

PL: I do. I don't understand why car drivers buy vast SUVs to pick up their kids from school when there aren't many classes taught at the top of a mountain. I looked at adventure bikes the same way, but the image doesn't reflect the reality. The RE's a great road bike. Sure, any bike could have done the eight hours of riding we've done today, but I feel fresh and ready for more – I've got no aches, no tiredness, yet can still feel the endorphins that only a bike ride can deliver. The only faults I've found with the Suzuki are remedied by ticking the options list: I'd add a centrestand and heated grips. Everything else has been a pleasure.

TH: High praise, and some might say controversial. You've stirred up a Strom in a teacup, Langy!

PL: I'm turning the headset off now, Tony.

TH: Copy that.

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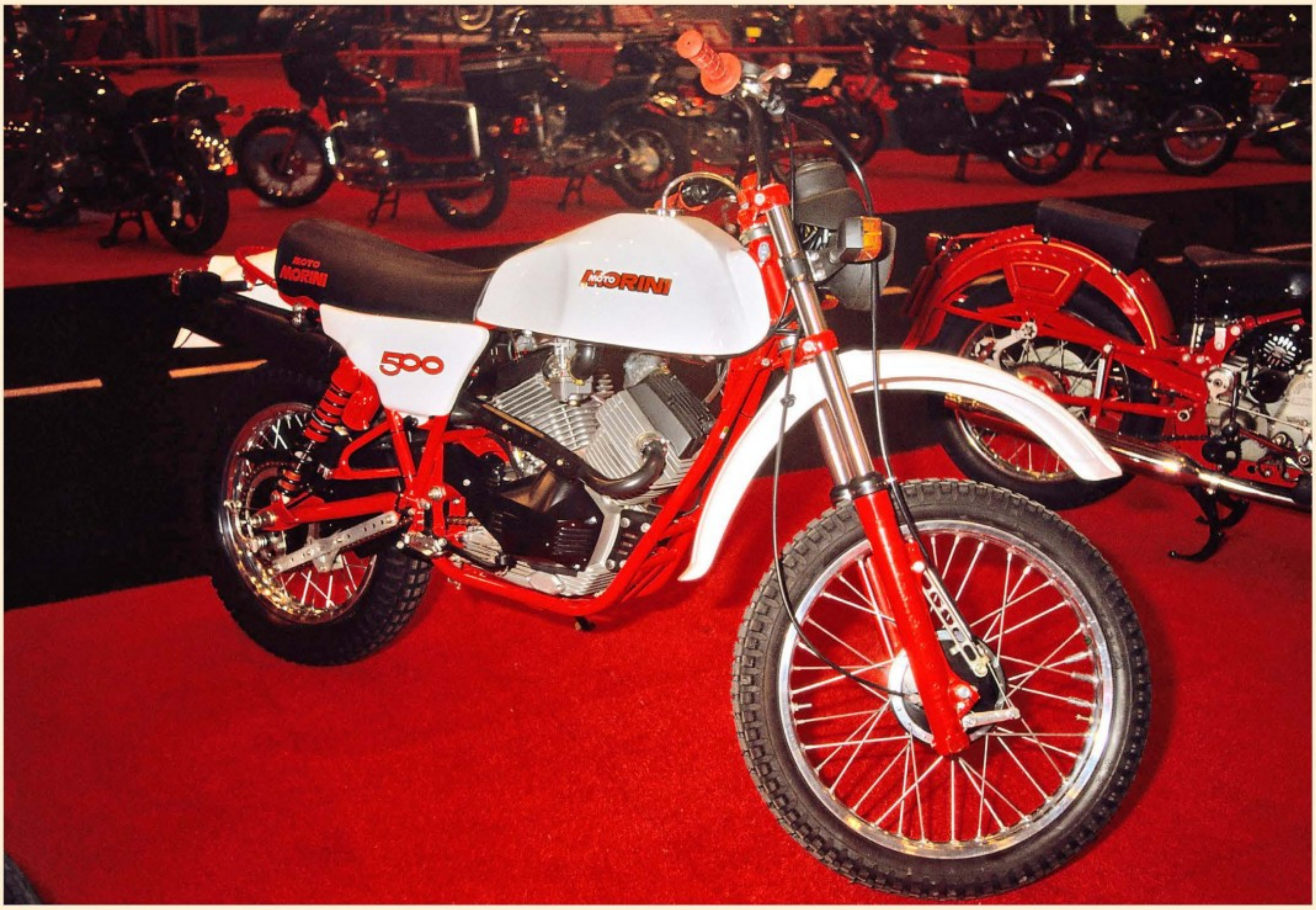

[Ahead of its time]

Moto Morini Camel

Light, compact, friendly, Morini's V-twin dual-purpose gem was a fabulous device – and the template for a swarm of enduro and adventure bikes giving it the Vee

A shining example of the efficacy of an inline V-twin for dirt applications had been around since 1953. Harley's KR (sidevalve) and later XR (overhead valve) flat trackers were slim, punchy and reliable. All you could reasonably wish for.

Up until 1980, no one appreciated the obvious rightness of the engine layout for off-road applications other than mile or half-mile ovals. Until motorcycle dealer Antonio Valentini, tuner and customiser of all things Moto Morini, took matters in hand.

Morini were masters of the compact V-twin. Their exquisitely engineered and robust 350cc 72° V-twin of 1973 had been stroked and bored to 478cc by 1977. In 1979 Valentini built three off-road prototypes employing this five-speed Moto Morini 500 power unit. A 'softer' camshaft with less valve overlap and lift was the only engine mod. The frame was a de-lugged 500 duplex-cradle, and cycle parts were largely Marzocchi off-the-shelf items.

In 1980 three riders entered the 7000km Transafrica 80 rally from Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to Turin, Italy. Rally raids were in their infancy (the first Paris-Dakar was 1979) and were horribly tough. Only six riders finished from 26 starters. Two of those were riding the Valentini Morinis. The third bike crashed (hard) with rider and machine unfit to continue. But a strong debut – strong enough for the factory to support Valentini's privateer mission with a six-speed gearbox, which just happened to emerge from the drawing office for the upcoming SeiV roadster.

Morini, sensing hardcore transcontinental enduros were a thing, released the first production Camel in 1981 – and why not? Ship of the Desert, evolved expressly for purpose, rarely lets you down, looks outstanding in its purposeful fashion. True to form, while it was cheaper and lighter (by nearly 80lb) than the BMW R80G/S, only the most discerning riders bought the Camel in favour of the portly flat twin that won the 1981 Paris-Dakar.

In 1985 Gianni Gagliotti nearly finished the Dakar on a Camel. With just 3km to go along the beach to the finish line, he was mobbed by local kids understandably wanting to know more about the handsome motorcycle he was riding. Concerned for their safety, he hit the kill switch. After 14,000km in 20 days, the Camel wouldn't fire up after the crowd had thinned. He had it tow-started… and was subsequently disqualified.

But Morini had made a point. The 500cc V-twin Honda Transalp appeared in 1985. The 650cc V-twin Honda Africa Twin in 1988. The 1000cc V-twin Honda Varadero in 1998. The 650cc V-twin Suzuki V-Strom in 2004… ***Mark Graham***

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